Women’s Strength and Growth in Reciprocal Relationship in the Context of Forced Displacement

Submitted by Lucy Holmyard in partial fulfilment of requirements for the Doctoral Degree in Clinical Psychology

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.
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“I can use what I have been through to plant words of hope and strength like seeds in the minds of others, that can germinate and grow there too.”

Abstract

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Much in the same way that the women’s strength and growth was constructed in relationship, so too was this thesis, which is not the creation of one mind, but of many. I have been so grateful to Avril Bellinger who has kept me looking into the murky uncomfortable places, nurturing my own growth and emboldening me to trust in my own voice. I am appreciative of Janet Smithson, who has consistently and patiently re-focused my attention, when various rabbit holes tempted my attention away from the task in hand. I am also grateful to those dear to me, who have encouraged, listened, reassured and inspired along the way. But my greatest thanks go to all the women at the women’s group who accepted me into their community with such warmth and heart. With particular thanks to those women and Playback Theatre volunteers who shared their personal stories with me.
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
DOCTORATE IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Women’s Resilience and Growth Following Forced Displacement: A Review of the Qualitative Literature

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Secondary Research Supervisor: Dr. Anke Karl, Senior Lecturer
Target Journal: Qualitative Research in Psychology
Word Count: 6229

Submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the Doctoral Degree in Clinical Psychology
Abstract

Within western psychology, displaced women have typically been framed within a single story of trauma, pathology and victimhood, which obscures significant psychological resilience and growth. These frameworks also neglect to take account of the gendered context in which women’s experiences of forced displacement unfold. This systematic review aimed to examine the qualitative literature pertaining to forcibly displaced women’s first-hand accounts of the development of resilience and post traumatic growth (PTG). A systematic search of five data bases was conducted and studies meeting inclusion criteria were assessed for quality. Nine papers were included in the review. A summary and critical evaluation of the studies are presented, and a meta-synthesis. Consistent with ecological systems theories, themes from the studies and meta-synthesis illustrated how intrapsychic meaning making processes related to resilience and growth were seen as embedded within a wider set of interacting systems, including close relationships, local community, religion, cultural systems and gendered social structures. Women’s resilience and growth was shaping and being shaped by these related systems as it unfolded contextually as a day-to-day process, alongside hardship and adversity. The review builds on previous literature by highlighting how gender intersects with other contextual layers to shape women’s experiences and expressions resilience and growth. Findings call for clinicians to move away from a singularly pathological conceptualisation of displaced women, and towards appreciating their suffering, resilience and growth as simultaneous, and interacting with multiple contextual layers over time. Implications for clinical psychology practice are outlined.
Introduction

The Forced Displacement Context and Clinical Psychology

By the end of 2019, there were nearly 80 million people forcibly displaced from their homes as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations (UNHCR, 2019). Those who seek and are granted asylum in a country of safety are described using the term ‘refugee’. Whilst ‘asylum seeker’ refers to a person who is awaiting a decision as to whether they will be granted refugee status (United Nations Refugee Agency, 2015b). The losses, separations and adversities associated with displacement have physical, psychological and social consequences (Porter & Haslam, 2005). It has been suggested by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2018), that:

Psychological evidence and practice can help to equip individuals, organisations and communities with the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need in order to help them navigate challenging experiences in a complex world. (p.3)

The intensification of worldwide conflicts means that displacement is rising exponentially, and as psychologists we are more likely to come across people who have had this experience in our practice (BPS, 2018). As stressed by Tribe and Patel (2007), if we want to provide inclusive psychological services, this needs to include work with people who have been displaced.
The Gendered Context and a Trauma Focused Story

The wider social structures within which forced displacement occurs are gendered; therefore, displacement unfolds in a gendered way (Lenette, Brough & Cox, 2012). Women experience gender related adversities pre, during and post-displacement, including sexual and gender-based violence, gendered expectations and adapting to gender-based norms in a new culture (European Parliament, 2016; Leibling-Kalifani, 2012).

Within western psychological frameworks, the experience of displaced women has typically been understood through a trauma focused lens. It is acknowledged that applying diagnoses such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) may have enabled identification of distress and support for some women (Papadopoulos, 2002; Bala, 2005). Some have argued that this trauma-focused story has become too dominant, to the point where traumatisation and victimhood is the only story (Papadopoulos, 2007; Patel, 2003; Summerfield, 1999); additionally, this way of understanding displaced women’s experiences has received criticism for the narrow focus on symptomology, whilst neglecting individual meaning making and paying little attention to socio-political, cultural and contextual factors (Bracken, Giller, & Summerfield, 1995; Watters, 2001). Furthermore, the way these understandings are applied is gendered. Women are more likely to be diagnosed with PTSD (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) and framed as ‘traumatised victims’ (Haywood, Hajdukowski-Ahmed, Ploeg & Trollope-Kumar, 2008).

From a narrative perspective, when ‘dominant stories’ are ‘problem saturated’, important parts of experience may be missed, compounding distress and difficulty
A ‘problem saturated’ narrative about displaced women risks disqualifying their strength and growth alongside the suffering they also endure (Kiteki, 2016; Pupavac, 2002). In line with White and Epston (1990), dominant stories can be internalised, acting as a barrier to growth and development (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Uy & Okubo, 2018). When the ‘traumatised victim’ story is pervasive, this also influences the assessment and intervention process, and the space for psychological practitioners to nurture resilience in the displaced people they are working with (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). In line with this, the BPS (2018) stresses the need for psychologists to address context and “take a holistic perspective, recognising the diversity and the resilience of asylum seekers and refugees and the survival strategies they possess” (p.9).

Towards Resilience and Growth Alongside Suffering

There is a multiplicity of definitions of ‘resilience’, but it can be described as positive adaptation in the face of adversity (Bonanno, 2004; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Some interpretations of ‘resilience’ can be criticised for being internally focused, perpetuating a dichotomy in which some people are resilient, and others are not (Masten, 1994). In response, there has been argument for a more nuanced understanding of ‘resilience’ as a dynamic process, which unfolds in relationship with a person’s environment (Rutter, 2012), and co-occurs with distress and vulnerability (Harvey, 2008).

Findings of the three known reviews of resiliency in relation to displaced people, are in keeping with contextualised conceptualisations (Rutter, 2012). In a non-
systematic review of the qualitative literature pertaining to refugee men, women and children, Hutchinson and Dorsett (2012) concluded that resiliency comprised an interaction between personal qualities such as optimism and adaptability, and external support systems. Obstacles to resilience included language barriers, racism and discrimination and being labelled by systems as ‘traumatised’. Ultimately, the authors emphasized that the resilience of displaced people is not something internal but encompasses the person’s environment (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). In a review of the literature specifically in relation to refugees of African origin, Kiteki (2016) also drew attention to contextual factors, highlighting the role of religion, spirituality and social support. Siriwardhana, Ali, Roberts and Stewart (2014), focused on those displaced by armed conflict, aiming to shed light on the relationship between resiliency and mental health outcomes. In keeping with other findings, a dynamic interplay between social networks, religion and individual belief systems were found to support resilience and well-being. Given the finding that resilience is contextualised, and that we exist in a gendered context, it represents a gap that there has been no review of the resilience literature specifically in relation to women’s experiences. Kiteki (2016) and Siriwardhana, Ali, Roberts and Stewart (2014) called for greater attention to this, recognising the cultural and gendered differences in the role of everyday resilience processes.

Beyond resilience, people who have been displaced often do more than ‘survive’ that experience (Papodopoulos, 2007). The adversity of displacement and meaning making around this can be a catalyst for psychological growth (Papdopoulos, 2007). Posttraumatic growth (PTG) is conceptualised to include development across three
areas: positive changes in self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and philosophy of life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Chan, Young and Sharif (2016), bring together the limited PTG literature in relation to the displacement experience, and draw on literature from other areas to highlight the need for further exploration of PTG in this population. The centrality of social support, religiosity, hope and optimism are bought to the fore. The gendered context and gender differences in experiences of displacement and PTG are discussed, but a lack of clarity about gendered experiences of PTG is highlighted (Chan, Young & Sharif, 2016).

**Summary, Rationale and Review Question**

In summary, western psychology’s over emphasis on the ‘traumatised victim’ narrative in relation to displaced women means that their resilience and growth is often obscure. This has led to literature exploring resilience and growth. Previous reviews have highlighted the role of context in the processes of resilience and PTG: however, there has not been a review of the literature which focuses particularly on the qualitative experiences of women and how they perceive their own resilience and growth to have developed. This is an important gap because experiences of displacement unfold in a gendered context and women face particular, gendered experiences. A focus on the qualitative literature brings women’s own insights and meaning making to the fore, which can be obscured by imposing western constructs such as PTSD. This review has a broad aim of elevating displaced women’s own meaning making in relation to their experiences, whilst seeking to address the outlined gaps in the literature and answer the following question:
From their own point of view, how do women develop resilience and growth following forced displacement?

Method

Search Strategy and Screening Procedure

I followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff & Altman, 2009); however, this framework is better suited to quantitative reviews, so I have made departures from it where that makes sense in the context of a qualitative review.

In December 2019 I conducted a systematic search of five databases: PsycInfo, PsycArticles, EMBASE, Global Health and CINAHL. I used the SPIDER tool (Cooke, Smith & Booth, 2012) to guide me in the development of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The SPIDER tool was deemed most appropriate because it was developed specifically to identify qualitative or mixed methods studies (Methley et al., 2014). The inclusion and exclusion criteria used for the review are detailed in Table 1. The review focused on the experiences of forcibly displaced, adult women; therefore, studies focusing on men, children, family groups or studies in which participants experiences were not separated by gender were excluded. The focus on the description of women’s experiences from their own point of view excluded quantitative studies and studies through the eyes of a secondary source. The review set out to explore experiences of forcibly displaced women who had re-settled outside their country of origin; therefore, studies focusing on the experiences of women living in temporary refugee camps were not included. Those
living in refugee camps often lack access to basic needs such as sufficient food, clean water, sanitation and housing (De Bruijn, 2009); therefore, it was deemed that this would represent a different sort of experience to those who had re-settled.

Table 1.

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of Interest</th>
<th>Inclusion Criteria</th>
<th>Exclusion Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Re-settled forcibly displaced women aged 18+</td>
<td>Study does not involve forcibly displaced women or did not separate forcibly displaced women from other groups studied (eg. men, children or other migrant groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Studies focusing on population under 18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Studies with women still residing in temporary refugee camps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenon of Interest</td>
<td>Women’s first-hand experience and understandings of developing strength/resilience/growth following forced displacement</td>
<td>Studies not focused on women’s first-hand experiences eg. those focused on views of aid works or other parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Studies which include women’s experience of forced displacement, but do not include aspects of strength/resilience/growth. Eg. studies that focus exclusively on challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and Evaluation</td>
<td>Methods yielding in depth data about individual experience and understandings within a</td>
<td>Use of methods yielding numerical and statistical data in an attempt to understand a broad</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Using the SPIDER criteria, key concepts of the review were identified. As suggested by the Cochrane Handbook (Higgins & Thomas, 2019), search terms were arrived at by running initial searches using key concepts and scanning papers for synonyms, alternative spellings and overlapping terms as well as looking at how relevant articles were indexed using controlled vocabulary. Terms within each key concept were joined using the OR Boolean operator and the searches for the key concepts of forced migration, resilience and gender were combined using the AND Boolean operator. Keywords were searched only within titles and abstracts. An example of the search terms used is shown in Table 2.
Table 2.

*Example of search terms used in database search.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Refugee* OR asylum seek* OR forced migr* OR forcibly displaced OR forced displacement AND 2. Hope* OR empower* OR Cope OR coping OR strength OR strong OR adapt* OR adjust* OR resilience OR growth OR post-traumatic growth OR resource* AND 3. Women OR woman OR female*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The search returned 636 records in total (Figure 1). Titles and abstracts were reviewed and those which clearly did not meet the SPIDER criteria were removed. Of the abstracts reviewed, 17 non-duplicates met criteria enough for full text screening. Full text articles were screened against the SPIDER criteria. A second reviewer (a clinical psychologist familiar with qualitative research) screened 6 full text articles and made an independent ‘yes’ or ‘no’ decision about whether they should be included. There was 100% inter-rater agreement between myself and the second reviewer about the six papers. A further eight records were excluded following full text examination. Reference lists and citations of the 17 papers were also searched for further relevant studies; however, no non-duplicates met inclusion criteria. A total of nine studies were included in the review.
Figure 1. Flowchart depicting selection of articles for review.

Records returned through database searching
- PsycInfo: n=87
- PsycArticles: n=3
- EMBASE: n=277
- Global Health: n=159
- CINAHL: n=110
  Total: n=636

Records after abstracts screened for eligibility
(n=17)

Records excluded when topic, methodology or participant group did not meet criteria. Duplicates removed.
(n=619)

Records after full text articles screened for eligibility
(n=9)

Full text articles excluded due to:
- Full text not in English: n=1
- Not peer reviewed: n=1
- Focused on refugee camps: n=1
- Not close enough to topic area: n=3
- Did not separate refugee and undocumented migrant women: n=2
  (n=8)

Total studies included in the review
(n=9)
Critical Appraisal

The quality of the nine papers was assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2018). The CASP does not suggest a scoring system and tools of this type are used in a variety of ways by different researchers (Hannes, 2011). For the purposes of this review, a score of 1 was given where the criteria question was met, 0.5 where it was partially met and 0 where the criteria was not met or there was insufficient information given. Scores for each question were combined to produce a total score out of 10 for each paper (Appendix A). Studies scoring 0-4 were considered low quality, 4.5-7 medium quality and 7.5-10 high quality. The second reviewer assessed quality of a sample of three papers. Prior to discussion there was 83% agreement in ratings given. Interpretations and discrepancies were compared and discussed until 100% agreement was reached. The difficulties in developing a quality assessment tool to capture the methodological pluralism of qualitative research has been well documented (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Dixon-Woods et.al. (2007) found little agreement in researchers’ quality assessments of papers when comparing CASP to two other assessment frameworks. It is therefore important to acknowledge that quality assessments are subjective, and ratings were undoubtedly influenced by my own values and those of the secondary reviewer.

Data Extraction and Synthesis of Results

A meta-synthesis of the findings of the papers was conducted. A meta-synthesis, provides an overall interpretive integration of the target experience, rather than a summary view of un-linked features (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). In vivo data was
extracted through noting the key themes and findings reported by authors of each paper, in relation to the review question (Appendix B). These themes were grouped across the papers and collapsed into over-arching themes (Appendix C). As outlined by Sandelowski & Barroso (2007), I moved iteratively between the in vivo findings and concepts such ecological systems theories, in a process of reciprocal translation. This process of reciprocal translation provided a final interpretive integration of findings across studies.

Results

An overview of the nine papers included in the review is presented in Table 3 and expanded on in subsequent sub-sections followed by a critique of the papers. A meta-synthesis of the findings, in relation to the review question is then presented.
Table 3.

**Overview of papers included in the review.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
<th>CASP Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Nashwan, Cumming &amp; Gagnon (2019)</td>
<td>22 Iraqi refugee women resettled in the US. Ages ranging from 50-63 years. Women had been living in the US for 1-4 years.</td>
<td>To provide an “in-depth examination of the unique challenges experienced by older, Iraqi refugee women, along with their capacity to be resilient”</td>
<td>Structured, audio-recorded individual interviews conducted by an Arabic speaking researcher.</td>
<td>Inductive thematic analysis conducted by three researchers.</td>
<td>Where basic needs, security and safety were available in the post-displacement context, resilience was able to emerge. With regards to development of resilience, women spoke of self-reliance, determination, faith, community and familial resources.</td>
<td>8.5/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Clarke &amp; Borders (2014)</td>
<td>10 Liberian, refugee women resettled in the US, ranging from 24-59 years of age.</td>
<td>To understand how Liberian women refugees cope with the stresses, traumas and losses associated with resettlement in the US.</td>
<td>Individual interviews</td>
<td>Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA)</td>
<td>“The participants’ coping methods were reflected in three main themes: …coping by representing themselves and their community in strategic ways (i.e., responsible, grateful, African),…coping by engaging with the new environment, and …coping through the stories they told themselves to make sense of their experiences.”</td>
<td>9.5/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Abraham, Lien &amp; Hanssen (2018)</td>
<td>18 Eritrean refugee women aged 18–60, who had obtained refugee status and were still living in an asylum reception centre. Women had been living in Norway for 1-8 years.</td>
<td>“To identify sources of resilience, coping and posttraumatic growth in female Eritrean refugees living in Norwegian asylum reception centres.”</td>
<td>Two semi-structured focus groups with 4 women in each group and 10 individual interviews where women felt unable to share their experiences or became distressed in the focus group setting.</td>
<td>Thematic analysis.</td>
<td>The women spoke of coping being facilitated by positive thinking, looking to the future, formation of a supportive community with fellow Eritrean refugees and religiosity. Women also highlighted that psychological difficulty they experienced represented a normal reaction to what they had experienced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Lenette, Brough &amp; Cox (2012)</td>
<td>4 single, African, refugee mothers with children, living in Brisbane, Australia.</td>
<td>Not explicit, but, implied aims were to explore refugee women’s stories of day-to-day life and unfolding resilience.</td>
<td>Ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, in-depth interviews and visual ethnography (reflexive photography and digital story-telling)</td>
<td>“Intersectional approach to analysis, yielding a “thick ethnographic description” rather than discrete themes.</td>
<td>The everyday nature of pathways to resilience and how this unfolds through the woman’s interaction with her environment was highlighted. Gendered networks of stress and support were stressed. “Resilience was an ongoing and ever-changing process in which the women were engaged every day as they faced shifting challenges and opportunities over time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Study Details</td>
<td>Sample Description</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Rating</td>
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<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>Sossou, Craig, Ogren &amp; Schnak (2008)</td>
<td>7 Bosnian refugee women re-settled in a south-eastern state of the US.</td>
<td>To investigate personal, lived experience of war and resiliency of Bosnian refugee women re-settled in the US.</td>
<td>Individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews.</td>
<td>Narrative analysis</td>
<td>The importance of family (especially children and spouses) and spirituality (rather than religion) were cited as important themes related to resilience. 7.5/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Whittaker, Hardy, Lewis &amp; Buchan (2005)</td>
<td>5 young, Somali refugee women living in the North of England.</td>
<td>“to explore individual and collective understandings of psychological well-being among young Somali (black African Muslim) asylum-seeker or refugee women”</td>
<td>Semi-structured, individual and group interviews</td>
<td>Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)</td>
<td>The women cited ‘moving on’, being strong, not dwelling on problems, family and community support, religion and supportive services as important factors in developing psychological well-being and resilience. 10/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>Keyes &amp; Kane (2004)</td>
<td>7 adult, refugee women, who had lived in the US for less than 5 years.</td>
<td>To understand the experiences and personal perspectives of Bosnian Refugees around how they adapt to and cope with life in the US.</td>
<td>Individual interviews.</td>
<td>Phenomenological analysis</td>
<td>For the women in this study, adapting to life in the US included obtaining new jobs to make a living, speaking English, finding empathy and reciprocity in human relationships and attempting to make friends and form social networks. Other ways of coping included sleeping as a 7.5/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>Newbold, Chung &amp; Hong (2013)</td>
<td>9 refugee women who had been in Hamilton (Canada) for between 1 month - 10 years. Women were from a range of countries including Hungary, Nigeria, Iraq, Cameroon, Afghanistan, Sudan and Congo.</td>
<td>“To share the perspectives of single, low-income refugee women on factors that encourage successful adaptation into new communities by examining how resilience is promoted, reinforced, or grown among refugee women in Hamilton.”</td>
<td>Semi-structured individual interviews.</td>
<td>Grounded theory</td>
<td>Resilience was promoted through informal sources, NGOs, government support, and personal characteristics such as their resourcefulness, determination, and strength. Most strikingly, all participants were dependent on all of these supports in order to meet their needs, reflecting notions of collective resilience, although some services were seemingly more important than others. These refugee women, through their optimism, strength, and determination, were able to foster a sense of collective resilience by drawing upon the resources that they embodied, but also by drawing upon the community resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>Mangrio, Zdravkovic &amp;</td>
<td>11 refugee women “recently arrived” in Sweden who</td>
<td>“…to further explore the perception of refugee women in Sweden”</td>
<td>Semi-structured, individual interviews.</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
<td>The importance of wanting to contribute through work and study was highlighted as a way of finding meaning and purpose in life in Sweden.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Carlson (2019) had received a residence permit. Ages ranged from 25-50 years. Concerning their situation during active participation in the resettlement process in the country.”
Participants

Across the nine studies, 93 women ranging from 18-63 years participated. Women originated from a range of countries including, Hungary, Nigeria, Iraq, Cameroon, Afghanistan, Sudan, Congo, Bosnia, Somalia, Eritrea, Liberia and Iraq. All studies took place in the western countries in which the women were resettling. Four studies took place in the US (#1; #2; #5; #7), and one each in Sweden (#9), Canada (#8), the UK (#6), Australia (#4) and Norway (#3). Where reported, women had been residing in the post-displacement country from between one month and 14 years.

Aims and Areas of Interest

Aims of the studies were diverse, varied and often multi-layered; however, they could be broadly organised in the following overlapping categories:

- To explore the personal perspectives and experiences of women following forced displacement.
- To understand the challenges that forcibly displaced women experience and how they adapt/cope/grow and develop resilience in the face of these challenges.
- To explore forcibly displaced women's personal understandings of psychological well-being/resilience and/or coping.
- To examine how resilience/adaptation/coping/growth can be nurtured among displaced women.
Design and Evaluation

Methodology.

All nine papers included individual interviews, but the nature of these varied in their level of structure and flexibility. The majority of studies (n=6) reported using semi-structured interviews, guided by a script or topic guide with some degree of flexibility; however, Keyes and Kayne (2004) described using one open ended question at the start of interviews, with further questions unfolding organically. Lennette, Brough and Cox (2012) conducted individual interviews, however, the nature of these is unclear from the paper and they were embedded within a wider ethnographic approach, involving fieldwork, participant observation and visual ethnography (reflexive photography and digital story telling). Two of the papers (#3 and #6) conducted focus groups alongside individual interviews.

Analysis.

A variety of qualitative analyses were used including thematic analysis (#1 and #3), content analysis (#9), grounded theory (#8), narrative analysis (#5), and phenomenological approaches (#2;#6;#7). The analytic strategy of the remaining paper was less clear; however, they wrote of using an “intersectional” approach to analysing women’s narratives within a broader ethnographic methodology (Lenette, Brough & Cox, 2012).
Risk of Bias Across Studies

**Participant samples.**

All of the studies used purposive sampling to recruit women whose experiences would be relevant in meeting the aims of the research. Just over half of the studies also used convenience and snowball sampling methods (#1; #2; #4; #7; #9). Snowball sampling might be useful in gaining access to ‘hidden’ populations such as displaced women; however, it is likely that fewer differing experiences are captured because the social connections between participants might make for a more homogenous group (Sharma, 2017). This is less of a difficulty in qualitative research, which is not typically seeking to generalise findings to whole populations and instead to capture a lived experience in greater depth (Harper & Thompson, 2012). Some researchers recruited exclusively through NGOs, community centres or support services, which was raised as a limitation by two papers because this strategy restricted the sample to women who had some access to support (#6 and #8). Crucially, it should be noted that displaced women are a relatively difficult to access group for researchers; therefore, opportunity and snowball sampling methods are difficult to avoid, and the cons of these methods need to be weighed against the pros of giving voice to at least some women.

Nearly all studies (n=8) focused on defined sub-groups of displaced women. Most studies focused on women originating from specific countries or regions (#1;#2;#3;#4;#5;#6;#7). Two studies were exploring the experiences of women in a particular age group (#1 and #6). Others were focused on women in certain social circumstances; women living in asylum reception centres (#3), single mothers with children (#4) and single, low income women (#8). The ‘thick description’ of more
defined sub-groups means that findings may have good transferability to other women within those particular sub-groups, but limited generalisability to displaced women more widely (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Mangrio, Zdravkovic & Carlson (2019) were the only authors not to focus on a defined sub-group, they also did not give any demographic information about the women included in the study such as age or country of origin, which might limit transferability and dependability of the findings.

**Data collection.**

The majority of studies (n=6), collected data from women living in one area of the resettlement country and as pointed out by Nashwan, Cummings & Gagnon (2019), experience in one town or city may not be generalisable to women’s experiences of living in other areas. The weight of this limitation depends on whether the authors were intending that their findings be generalised to other settings, something that varies widely across different qualitative schools of thought (Harper & Thompson, 2012). For example, Leanette, Brough and Cox (2012), specifically state that “the aim was not to generalise findings, but to look at contextualised experiences” (p642).

Women across the studies were typically not native English speakers, and researchers were working across languages and cultures. The majority of studies were either conducted in English or did not detail which language was used in data collection (n=6). Most authors could have provided more discussion of how the data collection language might have come to bear on expression and meaning making. Other studies did address this complexity, for example, Abraham, Lien and Hanssen (2018), report that data was collected by a multi-lingual researcher, who shared a language with the women in the study and then being translated into English for transcription. Despite
sharing a language, the researchers discuss the possibility of meaning being ‘lost in translation’ and used a co-translator who also spoke both languages. Clarke and Borders (2014), discuss involvement of ‘cultural auditors’ in the development of the interview questions.

Methods of data collection were typically well suited to the aims of the studies. Three studies (#3, #4 & #6) were triangulated using multiple methods. This represents a strength of these studies, which were able to come at the phenomenon under study from a variety of angles, which may increase richness and trustworthiness of the findings (Harper & Thompson, 2012). The majority of studies (n=7) only included data collected from interviews conducted at one time point, which was highlighted as a limitation by some authors (#2 and #6). Two studies (#4 and #6) included data collected over multiple time points, which arguably allowed narratives or themes to unfold and be expanded upon gradually and in greater depth.

**Analyses.**

Authors gave varying detail on how data was coded, and themes were selected. The majority of the studies (n=5) describe analysis involving more than one researcher, and most studies (n=5) also took the transcripts and/or emerging themes back to the women, which demonstrates a good level of transparency and may enhance credibility of the subsequent findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Rigour and credibility were further enhanced in some studies, for example, through use of a reflecting team in the analytic process (#2) and by taking transcripts and themes to independent assessors (#6).
Findings.

All studies used direct quotes from the women to back up their findings, but how these were used varied considerably across studies. Some studies were very thorough in use of quotes. For example, Whittaker, Hardy, Lewis and Buchan (2005), provide quotes for each theme, which enhances the credibility of the findings. In other studies, not every theme is backed up by quotes, for example, Keyes and Kayne (2004) only begin providing quotes to back up themes part way through the findings section, which undermines the credibility of the themes. Furthermore, in some studies it is unclear how many women are represented by a theme because authors use general language such as “some women” or “many women” rather than giving a specific number. Some studies only provide data which fits into a theme and do not compare and contrast between participants, possibly undermining credibility of the reported findings (Huberman & Miles, 2002). In contrast, other studies in the review did explore differences between participants and theme discrepancy. For example, Nashwan, Cummings & Gagnon (2019), compare two contrasting themes “continued hardship as a refugee” and “a beautiful life as a refugee” and Leanette, Brough and Cox (2012) provided in depth comparisons between each of the women in their study.

Researcher reflexivity.

The majority of papers provided little or no written exploration of the contribution of the researcher’s background in shaping the research process. Researcher positioning, their relationship to the topic and the women was rarely considered. This represents a weakness, because attending to and detailing the reflexive process is a
way of ensuring transparency, rigour, quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Harper & Thompson, 2012); however, it is difficult to know whether the reflexive process was not included in the papers because it was not attended to in practice, or whether this is reflective of the limited journal space for discussing these aspects of research (Mitchell et al., 2018).

There were two notable exceptions, which provided rich reflexive accounts. Clarke and Borders (2014), provide a section on ‘Researchers as Instruments’ in which they detail their role, position and values in relation to the research. They also spoke of reflexive bracketing and use of a reflecting team during the course of the research. Whittaker, Hardy, Lewis and Buchan (2005) also provide a section on ‘Researcher Characteristics’, detailing researcher positioning, pre-conceptions and report use of bracketing. These authors also write of consulting with Somali and Muslim colleagues, which represents an acknowledgement of the complexities and biases that might arise in cross-cultural research.

**Ethical considerations.**

In the majority of studies, details about ethics were not comprehensive enough, with a significant minority (n=4) not mentioning ethical approval. This is a significant gap, particularly in research with displaced women, in which consideration of power imbalances, cultural differences and language barriers are fundamental (Ellis, Kia-Keating, Yusuf, Lincoln, & Nur, 2007; Leaning, 2001; Temple & Moran, 2011). The majority of studies could have paid more attention to the ethical issues raised by the research; however, this might be a wider issue around constraints of journal publication.
Meta-Synthesis of Results

The review sought to collate the qualitative literature to explore how women describe developing resilience and growth following forced displacement. During the course of the meta-synthesis, intrapsychic meaning making processes related to resilience and growth were seen as embedded within a wider set of interacting systems, including close relationships, local community, religion, cultural systems and gendered social structures. Women’s resilience and growth was shaping and being shaped by these related systems as it unfolded over time as a day-to-day process, alongside hardship and adversity. This is congruent with ecological systems theories such as Bronfenbrenner (1979), which outline levels of influence on human development as comprising interacting systems, from immediate relationships (the Microsystem) to those more distal, yet permeating influence on the individual, such as cultural and societal belief systems (Macrosystem). Theorists (Harvey, 2008; Ungar, 2011), have argued that the process of resilience and growth is best viewed within such an ecological framework in order to attend to the dynamic interplay between social, cultural, contextual factors and intrapsychic processes; therefore, ecological systems theory was drawn on during the meta-synthesis as a way of integrating findings across studies (Figure 2).
Women across all studies made sense of their past, present and possible future experiences through the creation of narratives. These narratives were inextricably related to the wider systems: relationships, gender, culture and religion. Women across several studies (n=5) spoke of the value of future oriented narratives in buffering challenges, difficulties and feelings of helplessness (#2;#3;#7;#8;#9). This included
plans and opportunities for further education, employment and language learning in order to foster independence, community, belonging, self-development and a sense of contribution (#3;#7;#8;#9). As well as looking to the future, women also spoke of drawing confidence, inspiration and motivation from the past (#2;#4;#7). For some women it was the challenges and struggles of the past that resourced them, for others it was the memories of past achievement and accomplishments. Women in several studies had narratives around the gratitude they felt for being free and safe in the present, having had their survival threatened in the past (#1;#2;#3;#7). Other women drew on spiritual or religious narratives, seeing their own story as part of a bigger plan, for example Liberian women spoke of good things being the work of God and bad things happening because of curses or evil spirits (#2).

**Relationships and services.**

Women across all studies spoke of the way in which social connection and relationships with others resourced them. This included maintaining existing bonds with family and making new relationships in the post displacement context. For some women the use of technology was invaluable in facilitating the maintenance of bonds with friends and family from whom they were separated (#1). Existing relationships with family and particularly with children were also an important source of motivation to carry on and not give up (#5 and #8). Other women spoke of the importance of fostering new relationships to establish a sense of belonging, community and normalcy (#7 and #8). Women in one study placed import on the quality of new relationships, stressing the value of trust, empathy, genuineness and reciprocity (#7). Other women spoke more
practically of relationships with others as a resource in gaining access to wider community infrastructure, education and support around navigating new bureaucratic systems and cultures (#2 and #8). Formal systems and services were cited as an important source of support and resilience by some of the women (#2;#6;#8). These included a range of services and professionals within healthcare, education, social services and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

**Macro level influences: culture, gender and religion.**

To a greater or lesser extent, all studies touched on the way in which women’s cultural, religious and gender-based context interacted to influence meaning making and how growth and resilience subsequently unfolded. Liberian women in one study, expressed the importance within their culture of working hard, being responsible, not relying on others and showing gratefulness (#2). Furthermore, cultural distinctions and identifying themselves as “African” or “Liberian” created a sense of pride which bolstered resilience in the face of challenges such as harassment or discrimination. The cultural importance of a “get on with it” approach was also talked about by Somali women (#6). Some women conveyed the intersection between culture and the gendered expectations placed upon them (#4;#6). For example, for some women there was an expectation that as the mother, they are the head of the household and a source of strength and support for others, meaning that expressing vulnerability is less culturally acceptable (#6). These gender-role expectations could be reinforced by other women and therefore, for the single refugee mothers in one study, connection with other women was simultaneously a source of support and challenge (#4).
In the majority of studies (n=7), women spoke of the importance of religion, faith and wider spirituality as a way of nurturing resilience and growth. Women in some studies spoke of how having a faith in their God kept them strong and was a source of guidance, coping and well-being (#1, #6). Religion was also helpful to women as a way of understanding and making meaning of what had happened to them in the past and what might happen in the future (#6, #2, #3). Other women spoke of the importance of religion in connecting them to others and linking them with a community (#8). Even where women did not identify as belonging to an organised religion, some spoke of the importance of belief in a higher power or a sense of spirituality within themselves that was a resource during difficult times (#5).

**Resilience and growth alongside hardship and adversity.**

For women across all the studies, resilience and growth co-existed alongside a myriad of hardships such as separation, loss, trauma, difficulty learning a new language and adjusting to a new culture to name a few. Furthermore, for many women, sources of strength and resource and sources of difficulty and challenge were not mutually exclusive but could contain elements of both (#4; #6). For example, community could be a source of support, but also a source of stress and struggle involving gendered pressures and judgements (#4). Lastly, two studies particularly drew attention to the way women described resilience unfolding over time as a dynamic process of meeting day-to-day struggles by drawing on a multiplicity of resources in the wider context (#4; #8).
**Discussion**

The women in the reviewed studies spoke of resilience and growth developing alongside hardship. This fits with the concept of resilience as “strength forged through adversity” - the women developed resilience *because* of the challenges they had experienced, not despite them (Walsh, 2003). This is also congruent with Tedeschi and Calhoun’s (2004) conceptualisation of PTG, in which they highlight that suffering and adversity can be a catalyst of growthful meaning making.

Women created narratives and made meaning of their experiences in ways that encompassed their past, present and imagined future. For example, recognising losses, speaking of themselves as grateful or appreciative for safety and looking towards a future with hopefulness and opportunity. This finding is congruent with the PTG literature, which highlights the importance of meaning making and the commonality of gratitude for living, among those who have grown through adversity (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

In keeping with previous reviews, the women described meaning making and subsequent resilience as constructed within a relational context (Hutchinson and Dorsett, 2012; Kiteki, 2016; Siriwardhana, Ali, Roberts & Stewart, 2014). The need to connect to others is an essential part of what it is to be human from the very first and is fundamental to survival, development and growth thereafter (Kohut, 1977); therefore, the re-building of self in relation to the social world is of central import for women who have been displaced (Savic, Chur-Hansen, Mahmood & Moore, 2016). Intimate and meaningful relational connection is also fundamental to a development beyond resilience and towards PTG (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).
As with previous findings, the centrality of relationships extended beyond person-to-person relating, to include relationships to God, religion and spirituality (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Kiteki, 2016; Siriwardhana, Ali, Roberts & Stewart, 2014). It has been suggested that religion and spirituality can influence meaning making in a way which creates a ‘protective shield’ in the face of adversity (Zukerman & Korn, 2014) as well as providing a path to community connection and belonging (Tippens, 2017). Furthermore, spiritual or religious development, or a sense of the self as belonging to something bigger, is often a central part of PTG (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

The current review builds on previous literature, which highlighted the contextual factors involved in resilience and growth for forcibly displaced people (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Kiteki, 2016; Siriwardhana, Ali, Roberts & Stewart, 2014). A focus on the qualitative accounts of women, illuminates how gender, culture and religiosity interacted, coming to bear on women’s experiences of the social world, the meaning made of their experiences and how resilience and growth subsequently unfolded. This fits with a recognition in the wider literature, that the way resilience develops is gendered because social roles and expectations are gendered (Hirani, Lasiuk & Hegadoren, 2016). Furthermore, gender expectations interact with culture, as well as other identities and ascribed social roles in complex ways to produce particular understandings, expressions and enactments of resilience and growth (Harvey, 2008; Ungar, 2011).

In the studies included in this review, women described how resilience and growth were embedded within multiple, interacting socio-cultural systems. This can be understood within a socio-ecological framework, which moves beyond individualised,
trait-based conceptualisations of resilience and growth, to recognise these processes as interacting dynamically with multi-layered contexts (Panter-Brick & Eggerman, 2012; Ungar, 2011). As stated by Ungar (2011), “both the individual and the individual’s ecology mutually adapt to one another, with the patterns that are protective highly variable and sensitive to both culture and context” (p. 10). Socio-ecological understandings of resilience fit well with the multi-layered descriptions of the women, although they do not fully capture the way in which women described drawing on multiple temporal contexts: past, present and imagined future experiences, contexts and relationships.

In summary, the accounts of displaced women across the reviewed studies indicate that resilience and growth unfolded alongside adversity, and in a dynamic day-to-day relationship between personal meaning making and multi-layered socio-cultural and temporal contexts.

**Implications**

Findings suggest that beyond a single story of trauma, displaced women can be understood as simultaneously suffering, surviving and growing in context. This highlights the value of psychologists not only seeing displaced women as ‘refugees’ or ‘asylum seekers’, which defines them according to this experience. Instead in work with displaced women, psychologists should also draw on pre-displacement experiences, identities, and hopes for the future. This is congruent with narrative approaches, which propose that drawing on ‘thick’, complex descriptions of a person’s life story, can


Furthermore, for psychologists working with displaced women, it is important to see suffering, resilience and growth as a complex, multi-layered, person-environment interaction. This includes paying attention to how intersections between roles, identities, gender, culture and religion shape resilience and growth for displaced women. Walsh (2007) stresses that mental health professionals can best foster resilience, healing and growth following trauma by moving away from an individual focus and towards building community, enhancing social connectedness, collective storytelling and re-establishing the rhythms and routines of life. This is congruent with community psychology understandings of trauma, resilience and growth, which stress the importance of a multi-level understanding, opening doors to multiple levels of intervention towards wellness (Harvey, 2008); therefore, as acknowledged in BPS guidance, work as psychologists with displaced women and other displaced populations, is likely to require working through connection with local community and third sector organisations.

**Strengths and Limitations**

The challenges of conducting qualitative systematic reviews are well documented and debated (Bearman & Dawson, 2013). The themes and findings of each study included in this report are deeply contextualised and the majority of studies focus on women from one particular country of origin. This coupled with the multiplicity of methods and epistemological standpoints makes synthesis a complex and imperfect process. In an attempt to systematically review such complex, contextualised research,
there is a danger of either being reductionist or of simply providing an un-linked summary view of the individual studies. The value of the meta-synthesis methodology employed in this review is that it thoughtfully integrates and interprets the studies in a way that provides new meaning in which the whole is more than the sum of its parts (Dixon-Woods et al., 2007). However, it must be acknowledged that some of the uniquely contextualised, rich insights from each study inevitably become diluted and de-contextualised during synthesis into a new ‘whole’. It is also acknowledged that the meta-synthesis process is a subjective one; my interpretation and synthesis of the studies is deeply rooted in my own values and experiences. For example, I will be bringing my own westernised, cultural understandings of what constitutes strength and growth; therefore, qualitative reviews provide one interpretation rather than ‘the’ interpretation and are not able to be entirely replicated (Bearman & Dawson, 2013). Despite not being definitive, this review has value in providing in depth insight and building collective understanding about displaced women’s strength and growth from their own perspectives.

**Future Directions**

Although elements of growth could be seen in women’s accounts across the studies, only one paper specifically addressed PTG (Abraham, Lien & Hanssen, 2018). Future research could move beyond strength and resilience, to focus on women’s growth following displacement. Additionally, findings of the review highlight the embedded, contextual nature of resilience and growth; however, the vast majority of studies included in the review relied on individual interviews. The exploration of the
interplay between socio-cultural and contextual factors with women’s strength and
growth would be enhanced by employing research methods that foreground context,
such as ethnography. Lastly, given the dynamic nature of resilience and growth, more
longitudinal studies could be useful in understanding how these processes unfold in
context, over time.

Conclusions

This systematic review of the qualitative literature builds on the findings of
previous reviews, drawing attention to how resilience and growth unfold alongside the
suffering and adversity of forced displacement (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Kiteki,
2016; Siriwardhana, Ali, Roberts & Stewart, 2014). As well as adding to these previous
findings, seeking the voices of displaced women in particular, the review draws attention
to how the meaning making central to resilience and growth is shaped by intersecting
social, gendered, religious and cultural contexts and identities. The review also
highlights how resilience and growth interacted with multiple temporal contexts (past,
present and possible future experiences and identities) as these processes unfolded
day to day. Findings call for clinicians to appreciate the suffering, resilience and growth
of displaced women as simultaneous, and interacting with multiple contextual layers
over time.
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and Suggestions for Future Research. Ideas and Research You Can Use:
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Appendices

Appendix A: CASP Scoring

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<td>Criteria Partially Met</td>
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<td>Criteria not met</td>
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<td>Whittaker, Hardy, Lewis &amp; Buchan (2005)</td>
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<td>Mangrio, Zdravkovic &amp; Carlson (2019)</td>
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### Appendix B: Example of Data Extraction Process

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<tr>
<th>Lenette, Brough &amp; Cox (2012)</th>
<th>Example data extracted from original study</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Extracted Themes/Findings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Resilience as a dynamic, on-going process</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Resilience was an ongoing and ever-changing process in which the women were engaged every day as they faced shifting challenges and opportunities over time. For instance, within Zora’s brief life snapshot, she clearly had to contend with ever-changing circumstances including raised but unrealized hopes of a job, substantial family support roles, the need to deal with her own health problems as well as a myriad of other daily life challenges. Zora’s willingness to respond quickly to rapidly changing life circumstances, roles and expectations is a powerful insight into the dynamic nature of resilience as an ongoing process.” (p.646)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Drawing inspiration and confidence from past experiences</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“As refugee women living in a new social, cultural, linguistic, economic and political environment, there were numerous unfamiliar situations to contend with. To negotiate these ongoing challenges, Thara drew inspiration and confidence from past experiences” (p.645)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Failure to cope as ‘not an option’</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Mila was not quite sure how she juggled different responsibilities. Like others in this study, Mila expressed a strong sense that a failure to cope was simply not an option:“Up to now I still wonder how I survived in a place where there was no safety, where anything could happen to you and your family any time, and you had no option. I still don’t know how I am managing a family of five and how I am doing the triple job that is work, study and family. (Mila) As exemplified in Mila’s quote, it can be a somewhat superfluous question as to the ‘exact’ source of their resilience. Certainly, not all the women could identify how they managed to cope, but what was shared was a pressing omnipresence of everyday struggles that simply had to be dealt with day in and day out.” (p.645)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Religious beliefs and prayer</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Thara, like others in the study with strong religious beliefs relied on prayer as a way to achieve the everyday goals she set for herself:”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lenette, Brough &amp; Cox (2012)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Extracted Themes/Findings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being a single mother with five children, life was full of ups and downs. It is hard to describe exactly how I was able to manage. But it involved sacrifice, commitment and courage to accomplish my dream. Being a Christian, my faith played a great role in my life in many ways. We always pray as a family and cast all our problems into the hands of the Lord. The hardship I overcame motivated me to be strong, struggle and never give up whatever the case might be, that was my motto. Survival was not a problem anymore because I have learnt to live with enough. With or without, life is the same. (Thara)” (p.645)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sources of resilience as sources of stress eg. community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“The women experienced both support and stress within the community in a highly gendered way. Thus, Thara’s leadership in creating a single mothers’ group within her community speaks to both the particular life challenges experienced by refugee women with children and the way in which they collectively respond to these challenges:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gendered expectations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The mutual support derived from the women’s group was in part a response to community gossip and scrutiny, particularly in relation to raising children without the presence of a husband:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenette, Brough &amp; Cox (2012)</td>
<td>Example data extracted from original study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracted Themes/Findings</td>
<td>single woman... When you are successful, you work, you educate your children, like myself, I did everything, all I could to educate my children. I don't know if it is jealousy or anything, instead of appreciating as a single woman manage to do all that, now they've come up with strange stories, they don't believe that I can do that. They say, maybe there is a man behind [laughs], she can't do that by herself, it's impossible, no woman can do that. So that's what I've heard several times and some people they have even confronted me. (Thara)” (p.647-48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Note:** The text above is an example of data extracted from the original study by Lenette, Brough & Cox (2012) regarding women's strength and growth in the context of displacement. The example quote illustrates the challenges faced by single women who are successful in educating their children. It highlights the themes of success, education, and the societal perceptions of women's capabilities.
Appendix C: Example of Meta-synthesis Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Main Themes and Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Nashwan, Cummings and Gagnon (2019) | Continued hardship as a refugee  
A beautiful life as a refugee  
Life in the US:  
Appreciation for organisation and calm  
Gratitude for rights and freedom  
Social support  
Continued difficulty:  
Language  
Lack of resources  
Discrimination  
Personal qualities (persistence, perseverance and self-efficacy, self-reliance)  
Faith in God  
Interpersonal resilience and support from others  
Technology as a lifeline between separated family members |
| Clarke and Borders (2014)    | Coping alongside hardship  
Outwards face: coping through representation of self and community in certain ways (eg. being serious, hard-working, responsible, grateful, African) and cultural maintenance.  
Coping through engagement with the new environment:  
Hopefulness and opportunities  
Getting to know new systems  
Relationships as resources |
Inward face: coping through stories told to themselves to make sense of experiences
Situating self as part of a wider spiritual plan
Making sense of struggles as specific to ‘refugee’ experience.
Viewing current difficulties in light of past experiences.
Sense of progress and hopefulness for the future a “better life”

| Abraham, Lien & Hanssen (2018) | Positivity alongside adversity
|                              | Appreciation for safety
|                              | Hopefulness for the future
|                              | Support and positive attitudes from centre staff
|                              | Social support from fellow Eritreans and establishing relationships with others
|                              | Spirituality and religiosity

| Lenette, Brough & Cox (2012)  | Resilience as a dynamic, on-going process
|                              | Drawing inspiration and confidence from past experiences
|                              | Failure to cope as ‘not an option’
|                              | Religious beliefs and prayer
|                              | Sources of resilience as sources of stress eg. community
|                              | Gendered expectations

| Sossou, Craig, Ogren & Schnak (2008) | Resilience alongside losses, changes and challenges of resettlement
|                                  | The importance of family
|                                  | Spirituality

| Whittaker, Hardy, Lewis & Support Services | ‘Moving on’ ‘getting on with it’
|                                             | Family and community support
|                                             | Religion
|                                             | Support Services
| Buchan (2005) | Impact of Somali culture  
Gender roles |
| Keyes & Kayne (2004) | Leaving behind the past to accept a new life  
Finding empathy and reciprocity in relationships and in social networks  
Accepting a new culture  
Coping with change and transition  
Integrations of past losses  
Increased independence  
Looking to the future and improving self  
Hopes and dreams  
Cognitive coping (meaning making)  
Gratefulness for Freedom and Safety alongside loss  
Focus on practical steps forward  
Using memories of the past |
| Chung, Hong and Newbold (2013) | Systems supported resilience (NGOs, community, governmental resources, education and health care)  
Religious, ethnic and cultural communities  
Personal characteristics eg. resourcefulness, independence, determination, courage and strength  
Hope and motivation for the future (eg. education)  
Resilience unfolding over time through interaction  
Receiving understanding and empathy |
| Mangrio, Zdravkovic & Carlson (2019) | Looking to the future: desire and willingness to achieve, setting new goals |
Resilience and Growth Unfolding within Relationships and Systems

- Family
- Friends
- Community
- Support Services
- Reciprocity and empathy
- Technology as a relational lifeline

Socio-cultural and Gendered Structures

- Interaction between cultural and gender role expectations
- Eg. women as primary caregivers
- Failure to cope as ‘not an option’ as a mother
- Culture of origin
- Getting to know a new culture

Meaning Making

- Drawing on past experiences
- Hopes and dreams for the future
- Spiritual and religious meaning making
- Gratefulness, acceptance and appreciation

Resilience and Growth Unfolding Dynamically Alongside Challenge and Adversity

- As a day-to-day negotiation of on-going challenges
- Sources of resilience as simultaneous sources of stress
- Continued hardship

Faith, Spirituality and Religion

- In relation to meaning making
- Prayer
- Guidance
- Links to community
Women’s Strength and Growth in Reciprocal Relationship in the Context of Forced Displacement

“I can use what I have been through to plant words of hope and strength like seeds in the minds of others, that can germinate and grow there too.”

Trainee Name: Lucy Holmyard
Primary Research Supervisor: Dr. Janet Smithson, Senior Lecturer
Field Collaborator: Avril Bellinger, Honorary Associate Professor in Social Work
Secondary Research Supervisor: Dr. Anke Karl, Senior Lecturer
Word Count: 8365
Target Journal: Qualitative Research in Psychology

Submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the Doctoral Degree in Clinical Psychology
Abstract

A single story of trauma has dominated Western psychological meaning making of displaced women’s experiences. This single story obfuscates women’s resilience and growth, whilst foregrounding an individualised understanding which does not address gendered, socio-cultural and relational contexts. Previous research suggests a more nuanced understanding of displaced women as simultaneously suffering, surviving and growing in socio-cultural and relational contexts; however, there is a dearth of literature exploring displaced women’s resilience and growth in relationship. This research sought to address that gap using a qualitative research design; a combination of narrative interviewing, ethnographic and auto-ethnographic methodologies to investigate strength and growth within multiple relationships: displaced women and their children; displaced women and volunteers; and displaced women and myself as a researcher. Analysis illustrated how growth and meaning making were constructed interpersonally and intersubjectively as reciprocal relational processes. This moves beyond previous literature which has situated relationships as a ‘backdrop’ to individual, internal psychological growth and meaning making, instead recognising these processes as inherently relational. This includes recognising ourselves, as clinical psychologists, and others in relationship with displaced women as part of a mutually influencing process of meaning making, where there can be psychological growth for both parties. Implications for clinical psychology theory and practice are outlined.
Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity...When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story...we regain a kind of paradise.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Introduction

**Forced displacement and Clinical Psychology**

Forced displacement describes a situation in which people are displaced from their homes as a result of persecution, conflict or human rights violations (UNHCR, 2019). There are nearly 80 million displaced people worldwide and this figure is rising exponentially (UNHCR, 2019). As forced displacement rises, psychologists are more likely to come across this in practice (Patel, Tribe & Yule, 2018); therefore, provision of inclusive psychological services should include work with people who have been displaced (Tribe & Patel, 2007). In acknowledgement of this, the British Psychological Society (BPS) highlighted a role for clinical psychologists (CPs) in working in the field of forced displacement (Patel, Tribe & Yule, 2018). Within BPS guidance (2018), one of four key areas outlined for psychologists is “*the need to take a holistic perspective, recognising the diversity and the resilience of asylum seekers and refugees*” (p.9). It has been recognised that this work will often take place outside of specialist mental health settings, requiring psychologists to work alongside community organisations and volunteers.

**Women’s Contexts**

This research comes from a feminist, social constructionist perspective, viewing women’s well-being as a product of meaning making within a socio-political context (Ungar, 2004). Gender is important to the research because the wider social structure within which displacement occurs is gendered (Lenette, Brough, & Cox, 2013). Women and children make up the majority of the forcibly displaced population (UNHCR, 2019).
Women are typically the primary care-givers in displaced families and have often become sole-parents as a result of displacement (Levi, 2014); additionally, women’s experiences pre, peri and post-displacement are gendered (European Parliament, 2016). This includes sexual and gender-based violence, gendered social expectations and discrimination, and adapting to gendered norms in a new culture (European Parliament, 2016; Sherwood & Liebling-Kalifani, 2012).

**Narratives and Meaning making**

How meaning is made of experiences can disempower and compound distress, or facilitate growth (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Uy & Okubo, 2018); however, not all narratives are equally valorised, with dominant constructions shaped according where the power is held in society (Foucault, 1980). Dominant narratives are more likely to disempower subordinated groups including women and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). ‘The personal is political’: there is a relationship between personal meaning making and dominant, gendered and racialised narratives in the wider context (Gluck & Patai, 1991); therefore, being in a powerful role as CPs it is important to critically examine our own frameworks for understanding to facilitate empowerment rather than unintentionally reinforce inequalities or disempowerment of forcibly displaced women (Patel, 2003).
A Single Story: Trauma

Within Western psychology, the experience of displaced women has typically been understood within a trauma-focused narrative (Papadopoulos, 2002). It is acknowledged that applying diagnoses such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has enabled recognition and support for distress for some women (Bala, 2005; Papadopoulos, 2002); however, this trauma-focused story has arguably become too dominant, to the point where traumatisation and victimhood is the only story (Papadopoulos, 2007; Patel, 2003; Summerfield, 1999). The individual focus of these frameworks also mean that the aforementioned socio-political, cultural, racial and gendered contexts in which experiences unfold can be overlooked (Papadopoulos, 2007; Patel, 2003; Watters, 2001).

It is undeniable that displaced women suffer; however, only seeing their world through a ‘traumatised’ lens gives rise to a problem-focused story. White and Epston (1990) argue that when ‘dominant stories’ are ‘problem saturated’, important parts of experience may be missed, compounding distress and difficulty. A ‘problem saturated’ narrative about displaced women risks disqualifying their strength and growth alongside the suffering they also endure (Kiteki, 2016; Pupavac, 2002). Furthermore, in line with White and Epston (1990), this story can be internalised, acting as a barrier to growth and development (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Uy & Okubo, 2018). As CPs, it is important that we move beyond this single story, towards a more holistic understanding, recognising displaced women’s strength, growth and suffering in context (Patel, 2003; Watters, 2001).
Towards a Multiplicity of Stories: Suffering, Surviving and Growing in Context

‘Resilience’ can be described as positive adaptation in the face of adversity (Bonanno, 2004; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Beyond resilience, post traumatic growth (PTG) describes how trauma and adversity can be a catalyst for psychological growth and development, including positive changes in self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and philosophy of life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Despite the positive focus, if ‘resilience and growth’ is applied as the single story, in an individualised, de-contextualised way, it could be as unhelpful as a single story of trauma; perpetuating a dichotomy in which displaced women are either resilient and growthful or traumatised (Lenette, Brough and Cox, 2012).

This research moves away from individualised, de-contextualised conceptualisations to understand resilience and growth as processes unfolding within a person’s socio-cultural and relational context (Rutter, 2012), and co-occurring with suffering (Harvey, 2008). This fits with a review of the qualitative literature, which found that displaced women were simultaneously ‘suffering’ and ‘surviving’, with resilience and growth unfolding dynamically within multiple relational, socio-cultural and temporal contexts (Holmyard, 2020).

Strength, Growth and Development in a Relationship

Despite a recognition that PTG unfolds within a relational context, this has typically been positioned as the ‘backdrop’ to individual growth, rather than a relational process in itself (Berger & Weiss, 2009). There is a dearth of literature exploring displaced women’s strength and growth relationally (Chan, Young, & Sharif, 2016;
Holmyard, 2020). This research seeks to address that gap by exploring strength and growth within the context of the mother-child relationship and within the relationship between displaced women and volunteers.

**Strength and growth in the context of mothering.**

There is a growing literature around parenting in forced displacement contexts. In line with the trauma-focused story, much of this research has been deficit focused, drawing attention to negative sequelae of displacement trauma on parenting. A review of the literature found that hardship and loss co-existed with strength and resilience for those parenting post-displacement (Merry, Pelaez, & Edwards, 2017); nevertheless, only one study focused on the strength and resilience narratives related to mothering (Merry et al., 2017). In their ethnography with four displaced mothers, Lenette, Brough and Cox (2012) highlighted the women’s resilience as a dynamic process constructed through navigation of day-to-day struggles (Lenette et al., 2013). No studies have looked beyond resilience to explore women’s growth whilst mothering through displacement. This represents an important gap given recognition in other areas that suffering, adversity and trauma can lay fertile soil for growth in the mothering role and in the relationships between women and their children (Bekteshi & Kayser, 2013; Muzik & Rosenblum, 2017).

**Growth in the context of working with displaced women.**

The concept of vicarious post-traumatic growth (vPTG) recognises that those working with people who have experienced various adversities and traumas can be
changed in profound and positive ways by their work (Arnold, Calhoun, Tedeschi, & Cann, 2005); however, this process has been given little attention within the context of forced displacement (Chan et al., 2016). Research with those working with displaced people has typically focused on vicarious traumatisation, compassion fatigue or burnout (Chan et al., 2016). There is only one known study exploring growth among those working with displaced people, which concluded that the distressing nature of this work sits alongside growth, reward and transformation (Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013). This study took place within one Australian organisation and called for replication across other countries and contexts. There has been no exploration of vicarious growth experiences specifically in relation to displaced women, which is pertinent given the gendered context in which displacement unfolds.

**Rationale, Research Questions and Aims**

A single story of trauma has dominated the Western psychological meaning making of displaced women’s experiences and those in relationship with them. Although displaced women undoubtedly suffer and experience trauma, only seeing this single story obfuscates their resilience and growth, whilst foregrounding an individualised understanding which does not take sufficient account of socio-cultural and contextual factors. This is important because how meaning is made of experiences can disempower and compound distress, or facilitate growth (Hutchinson & Dorset, 2012; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Uy & Okubo, 2018). Instead of seeing displaced women as traumatised or resilient, we might see them as simultaneously suffering, surviving and growing in context.
The contextual and relational nature of psychological growth and resiliency has been highlighted by the literature, although no studies have explored how psychological growth might unfold in the context of the mothering following displacement. Much attention has also been paid to the difficulties and negative psychological consequences of working with displaced people; however, only one study has explored the potential for psychological growth when doing this work, and no studies have explored this specifically in relation to displaced women. Set within a wider aim of adding to a more nuanced and empowering ‘multiplicity of stories’, this research seeks to address the following questions:

- How do women talk about their psychological strength, growth and development in the context of mothering through forced displacement?

- How do those working with displaced women and their children talk about their own psychological growth and development through this work?

**Method**

**Research Approach**

**Situated narratives.**

From a narrative perspective, people make meaning of their experiences through the stories they tell (Murray, 2007). Storytelling has the capacity to bring about a change in the teller in relationship to wider society, subsequently providing a way of empowering the voices of subordinated groups (Battacharya, 2016; Langellier, 2001). A narrative approach offers a way of connecting the personal experiences of displaced
women with the wider context, with the potential for empowerment in this process. In order to more deeply contextualise the women’s narratives, I also drew on ethnography (Tedlock, 1991). Ethnography emphasises the importance of developing relationships with people and their contexts over time (Atkinson, 2015; Hammersley, 2006). This typically involves interacting with, observing and engaging in the ‘rhythms of life’ within the social environment through ‘participant-observation’ (Atkinson, 2015).

**Reflexivities of discomfort.**

The aim of narrative research is not to get to a ‘truth’ but to understand how meanings are constructed contextually and relationally (Bhattacharya, 2016). How I make meaning of the stories I have heard is inextricably linked to my own experiences (Clarke, Broussine & Watts, 2015). Instead of seeing this as a complicating factor, this research comes from the position that the feelings and experiences of the researcher provide rich additional insights (Clarke, Broussine & Watts, 2015).

Reflexivity was defined by Berger (2015) as a “turning of the research lens back onto oneself…[taking] responsibility for one’s own situatedness within the research” (p.220). Pillow (2003) discusses the problem of reflexivity practices becoming comfortable, sanitised and ‘paralysed’; she argues for ‘reflexivities of discomfort’. I have embraced a ‘reflexivity of discomfort’, staying with the painful feelings and messiness that has arisen and allowing this to shape the research process. I engaged in the reflexive process through journaling (Appendix A), reflexive meetings with a field supervisor and mentor, and I have been engaged in personal psychoanalysis
throughout the research process. Together, these spaces opened up feelings, thoughts, experiences and unconscious agendas for exploration.

Through the reflexive process a decision was made to include an autoethnographic component to the research, exploring my own growth through relationship with the displaced women. Autoethnography rejects a sharp distinction between ‘self’ and ‘other’, dismantling the ‘othering’ which often exists in research (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010). Autoethnography intends to connect self with others and self with the socio-political and cultural context (Reed-Danahay, 1997).

In summary, I used narrative, ethnographic and autoethnographic methods and embraced a ‘reflexivity of discomfort’, to make possible a multi-layered, evolving exploration of growth and development in the context of displacement.

Research Context

This research took place in partnership with a third sector organisation working with displaced people in a UK city. The project provides support and activities for and with displaced people living in the local community.

The organisation holds a regular women’s group, providing a community space for women and their children, who have been displaced from a wide range of countries. This group is held and facilitated by Playback Theatre volunteers. Playback Theatre is a form of community theatre, which enacts audience stories through improvisation.

Consistent with an ethnographic approach, I attended the women’s group regularly over a two-year period, building relationships with the displaced women and facilitators. I came to know the women’s contexts, stories and day-to-day lives through
Playback, conversation and being with one another; therefore, although the number of recorded narratives presented here is limited, the research, analysis and findings were constructed in the context of multiple stories told and witnessed over time in relationship with this community of women.

**Participants**

Four displaced women chose to meet and share their stories in more detail. The women were from a range of countries and had been living in the UK for between 18 months and nine years. They all had young children and spoke English proficiently. Five Playback Theatre volunteers also met with me to share their stories. All of the volunteers were White, Western women and were also all mothers. The time they had spent with the women’s group ranged from six-months to 12 years. The displaced women and the volunteers are all women; however, for ease of distinction, in this account the displaced women will be referred to as ‘the women’ and the Playback volunteers as ‘the volunteers’.

**Ethics**

Ethical approval was sought from the University of Exeter Ethics Committee (Appendix B). It is acknowledged that power imbalances can make it difficult to obtain truly informed, voluntary consent from displaced people and it is possible that the women may have felt obligated to participate (Ellis et al., 2007). Taking time to build relationships reduces the impact of power, creating a trusting space for stories to be told (Birman, 2005). In the context of the women’s group, I had multiple conversations with
the women about the research and their lives, before asking them whether they wished to participate in an interview. Information sheets (Appendix C) and consent forms were provided in English and Arabic. Identifying details have been removed from interview transcripts and each participant has been given a pseudonym.

**Narrative Interviews**

After seeking consent, a convenient meeting time and location was arranged. I met the majority of women in their homes. All volunteer interviews were conducted remotely by Skype or telephone, due to COVID-19 (Appendix F).

Interviews were initiated with an open question (Appendix G), inviting the telling of the story un-interrupted until a clear coda indicated the end of narration (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). I expanded the narrative with follow-up questioning. When recording was stopped, there was time for reflection and informal talk.

Participants were offered a transcript or audio recording of their story. After a copy of their story had been received, I invited the women to meet with me for further un-recorded conversations to reflect on their story. For various reasons including birth of a baby, moving out of area and COVID-19, this has only been possible with one woman so far.

I was interviewed over Zoom about my own process of growth in relation to the women. This interview describes my story at one time point; but was informed by the reflexive auto-ethnographic process fundamental to the whole research journey. I was interviewed by a CP friend and colleague who was familiar with qualitative interviewing. My story was transcribed and analysed alongside the other transcripts (Appendix H).
In total, nine interview transcripts and one set of interview notes were included in analysis, comprising three transcripts from interviews with the women, five transcripts from interviews with volunteers and my autoethnographic interview. A fourth woman (Huawa), was uncomfortable with being audio recorded; instead I made a write-up of our conversation (edited and approved by Huawa) and used this. For all other interviews, I analysed the full verbatim transcripts.

Method of Analysis (Appendices I-K)

Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Drawing on McCormack (2004), I mapped out story summaries for each transcript, allowing me to see the shape, structure and movement of the story. Story summaries were taken back to the teller for comment. I then condensed the story summaries, looking at them alongside one another to identify narrative themes across stories. I moved iteratively between wider structural themes and a finer grain analysis of narrative positioning guided by Bamburg (1997), to further develop the themes (Table 1).

Table 1.

Method of analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Verbatim Transcription</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Creation of story summaries: mapping structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transcripts and story summaries taken back to the teller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Story summaries condensed and comparisons made between stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identified narrative themes across stories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Method of Analysis

- Finer grain analysis of each transcript with focus on narrative positioning, including how the teller positions themselves:
  - In relation to others in the story
  - In relation to me, the listener
  - In relation to themselves (Who am I?)
  - In relation the wider narratives
- Movement between themes and analysis of positioning to further develop themes

Analysis

I will provide a brief account of the ethnographic setting. I will go on to explore key narratives emerging from the women’s stories, followed by narratives from the volunteer stories. Lastly, I will present a short account of my autoethnographic reflections. In this paper, the analysis focuses on narratives related to strength and growth. There were many other important narratives constructed in the stories, which there is not space to discuss here.

Ethnographic Setting: The Women’s Group

Through being with the women’s group over time, I experienced and observed how women’s strength and growth was co-constructed through relationship, community and shared story. The first part of the group was marked by welcoming and coming together through sharing tea and informal conversation. This connection was built on through facilitated games emphasizing the links between us as women, before moving into sharing and re-enacting stories through Playback. Stories told included struggles through trauma, separation from family and community, isolation, loss, uncertainty and
discrimination. Within these narratives of adversity, there was often also a recognition of strength, growth and empowerment as women and mothers. ‘Big’ stories of loss and trauma were not always at the forefront and instead could be the backdrop to ‘smaller’ anecdotes of day-to-day life. The telling, enacting and witnessing of stories moved beyond the individual, in which “I” became the collective “we”, comprising all of us in the group. Meaning was made of suffering, strength and growth at a shared level, generating a sense of community and empowerment. For example, in one group, after hearing another woman’s story, one woman commented that “we have all suffered, but we all have strength and value despite our circumstances”.

Women’s Stories

Life before.

All the women started their stories situating themselves within their past contexts before coming to the UK. This included locating themselves within wider familial networks or support systems, and also roles outside of mothering, such as themselves as professionals. For example, Rabia begins by telling me:

Well, I had my first there in [country of origin] and you know all of my family was around…so I really enjoyed that time. They taking care of me… it was my first baby, so my Mum was there, my aunties, everybody come. They help me with my … breast feeding, because in the beginning it is really painful…I enjoyed that moment.
Rabia describes herself as a new mother, being cared for, helped and held within a wider network of women. This sets a starkly contrasting backdrop to the isolation, mothering alone and position of sole responsibility that unfolds later.

**Strength and growth through difficulty.**

Rabia and Guvva constructed narratives of moving from positions of mothering within wider familial networks and support structures, to mothering alone post-displacement. Both women articulated the challenges of this and the weight of sole responsibility for their children. Within their narratives, they also constructed themselves as strong or growthful, often through the necessity of navigating difficulties alone. For example, Guvva expresses:

*It was difficult for me at first because I couldn’t cook anything for her, but UK teach me to do everything and now I have all skills about life, about domestic life…because here you don’t have anyone to help you and for everything, from small domestic issues, to your interview with Home Office …you have to do yourself.*

Guvva starts by expressing her difficulty in feeling unable to provide for her daughter in the UK. She then moves to speaking of the UK as a ‘teacher’ and how the context of mothering alone has given rise to new skills and developments. Guvva goes on to say:
After a few months, I became a bit more unstressful than before…Sometimes I remember and I think it’s not (.) it wasn’t my life, I think ‘how is I able to did all this?’

In the act of remembering, Guvva communicates her disbelief about the amount that she has lived through. Using the words ‘I’ and ‘did’ she also conceives of herself as an active agent in this change, with ownership over what she has been able to do. Huawa also spoke of feeling “completely alone” and that “no-one helped me”, as she navigated the experience of being separated from her baby son. Through this experience, she spoke of finding an inner strength and determination, which carries her forwards to continue the fight to be re-united with him.

Jafia spoke of navigating difficult experiences of being judged and discriminated against as a mother:

I was walking with my children and I think [youngest son]…was crying and …all the people in the street look at me…in judge way, like they are watching to see what I will do, so I feel like I am on spotlight… They assume that I will hurt or punch my children because they are crying, because I had a head scarf

The word ‘spotlight’ constructs an image of Jafia’s mothering being under scrutiny. She conceives of herself as figuring as violent in the minds of those watching her. Later in this story, Jafia speaks of moving from a position of powerlessness in the face of
discrimination, to taking a strong agentive position, challenging how she is being situated by others in society:

I moved from just being like that [Jafia shows me shrinking body language with eyes to the floor], shy, to asking “What? Why are you looking at me? Is something wrong?”. Not just be silent or be afraid… If anyone next time tried to be racist to me…I will look at his eyes or her eyes and say “What? Is there anything wrong?”

Through this narrative about experiencing judgement and discrimination, Jafia constructs a sense of herself as developing greater acceptance of others and her intention to share this learning through the way she mothers her children:

The most valuable things I learnt from here, I will teach my children about that, is acceptance. Accept all the people, whatever their religion or non-religion or their colour, what they do…it not matter your outside, but something inside.

Given that the context of this acceptance is having not been accepted herself, we might interpret the final sentence about the “inside” mattering, as Jafia’s recognition that her own ‘inside’ matters.
**Reciprocity and meaning making.**

The women spoke of the necessity to be strong for their children, but also of their children as a *source* of strength, motivation, hope and joy. Motherhood and the relationships with their children, were positioned in their stories as a way of giving meaning to their post-displacement lives. In this way, the mother-child relationship was constructed as a reciprocal source of strength and growth. For example, Huawa spoke passionately about needing to “*fight to see my son*” and how imagining being with him again and “*showing him who he is and where he comes from*” gives her a sense of meaning and purpose, which “*keeps me strong and alive*”. Jafia also speaks of her children as giving her something to fight for. For Jafia, this is particularly in relation to her eldest son who has a disability. She expresses:

> *My strength now I think is from [eldest son] and for him…*the doctor tell me something, I think that is my strength, he told me “…you are his gate to new world” … I just told myself, I have target, I have goal, [eldest son] is my goal.*

Using the words “*from*” and “*for*”, Jafia positions herself as being a source of strength for her son, whilst he is also a source of strength for her. She recounts the doctor’s words that she is her son’s “*gate*”, constructing herself as opening up his world, whilst speaking of her son as a “*goal*”, positioning the relationship with him as giving her purpose, direction and meaning. She builds a narrative of the relationship being a conduit for them both to open outwards (the gate) and move forwards (the goal).
Rabia and Guvva spoke of the necessity to be strong, but also of how their children’s happiness and safety gives them reason to be strong. For example, Rabia expresses:

_I have to bring up kids… life is not easy …but when I see my kids, they are happy, they grow and live their life, so I know, … if I could take them and go back home, they are going to suffer, so (.)…that make me strong (.) yeah (.) I have to be strong because of them (LH: Mmm)._!

Rabia begins by setting up the context of life being difficult; however, she interrupts this story of difficulty with the word “but”, introducing the witnessing of her children’s happiness and growth as something that counters this difficulty. Rabia speaks of this ‘making’ her strong, positioning herself as receiving strength through the relationships with her children as well as ‘having to’ be strong because of them.

**Strength and growth as ever evolving.**

Through the women’s narratives, strength and growth were constructed ongoing processes, continually evolving temporally and relationally.

Guvva spoke of continued change across time:

_Everything change, a 180 degree change…from the beginning to today… Now I can sleep, I can do what I want, I am more strong than before, more confident and my English is better … I think after 2-3years it will be better than today._!
Guvva reflects back to “the beginning”, stressing how much things have changed since then. In this context of change, she also speaks of herself as changing, becoming stronger and more confident. At the end of the passage she constructs a sense of continued momentum, looking to the future with hopefulness. This sense of movement was continued in my meeting with Guvva several months after she had received a copy of her story. Guvva reflected in various ways on how she had continued to grow since the time of our interview. She told me “I no longer feel so weak as I did then, this gives me hope for future”.

Other women spoke of growth and developments evolving through relationship: For example, Jafia expresses:

In my country… they don’t give the women their rights … so, when I came to here, I didn’t know what is my rights…through the years, I know my rights. … the man here, the women here [Jafia motions with hands level with one another], it’s not one up and one down, you are the same…And I will raise my daughter for that, “your rights, no-one will take your rights”.

Jafia reflects back to when she arrived and did not know her rights as a woman. She speaks of learning about this over time and developing a strong conviction about her own rights. She goes on to look into the future, speaking of how this development will continue to evolve as she shares it relationally in the way she raises her daughter.
In her story, Huawa also reflected on how her own experiences of adversity and growth, could continue to grow through relationships. She said:

“I can use what I have been through to plant words of hope and strength like seeds in the minds of others, that can germinate and grow there.”

In her metaphor, Huawa speaks of what she has “been through” (trauma and adversity) proceeding growthful production of “seeds”. These “seeds” are germinated in the “minds of others”, constructing the continued expansion and evolution of growth relationally.

**Volunteer Stories**

**Self as an ‘outsider helper’**.

Volunteers typically reflected on how they had entered the women’s group positioning themselves as ‘outsider helpers’ in relation to the women. For example, Lisa reflects on entering into the work with the women positioning herself as a helper and the “poor refugees” as ‘in need’ of her help:

*I definitely went there with this sense that, these people… the ‘poor refugees’ need some help and I’m going to help…Which now feels so naive really.*

The word “poor” describes the women as vulnerable or lacking in anything to give. This constructs a one-way relationship in which the “refugees” are ‘receiving’ the help and
she as a volunteer is the ‘giver’ of the help. Ali speaks of expecting that she was going to “deliver” something:

_I don’t think I really thought that much about what I was about to go and do …_  
_But already a privilege that I might be able to go and do Playback for these women…but I hadn’t got any concept…that I could be (.) part of it…I thought that we would go and deliver_

The word “deliver” is again suggestive of a one-way relationship in which she is positioned as giving, with the women in the position of receiving.

**Growing as women together: connection and reciprocity.**

Through their stories, the volunteers deconstructed the idea of themselves being ‘outsider-helpers’ and spoke of connecting as “women together” (Ali). Empathic connections were constructed in the narratives through links in common experiences of suffering, motherhood, womanhood and feeling. The volunteers also challenged the initial conception of themselves as solely ‘giving’, instead they spoke of what they received through relationship with the women including welcome, acceptance, learning, care, generosity, strength, comfort and love.

In contrast to earlier in her story, Lisa goes on to speak of ‘meeting’ as women:

_We’re all just women. We can meet each other like that…rather than us being the caretakers… those women are incredibly resourced…and just so…full of_
courage… I don’t need to… put myself aside in order to be with them… I feel like it’s equal. I feel I’ve learnt so much… there’s this education going on for all of us.

The word “meet” suggests a joining rather than the earlier separation between self and “the poor refugees”. In contrast to the displaced women as “poor”, here Lisa speaks of them as being “full” and having much to give; subsequently, a more “equal” and reciprocal relationship is constructed, through which Lisa goes on to speak of seeing herself as a mother differently:

I’ve got 4 children… it’s not been easy… So, I have had to be strong and resourceful… and… cos lots of them have got lots of children… I know the struggle of having lots of children… and not having much money… In a way that’s the way I feel most interconnected… as a mother. And feel most acknowledged… I feel like they get it… I feel like it’s helped me respect myself really. Seeing the value that’s placed on mothering.

Lisa begins by establishing an empathic connection with the displaced women in the place of mothering. The word “acknowledged” and the language “they get it” constructs an understanding between herself and the women. Through seeing herself in the displaced women, she builds a picture of how the value and respect ascribed to them as mothers has been reflected back into herself, germinating greater self-respect and acknowledgement of her own strength and resourcefulness.
Beth and Ali spoke of connecting to the displaced women through common experiences of trauma and motherhood. For example, having earlier spoken of how she had expected to be in a position of providing and delivering something ‘for’ the women, Ali later expresses:

> Our family went through quite a lot of deep trauma during the time I was working with the refugees…our family was under threat…So going every week and being in a room full of women…there are so many women separated from their children… they laugh and they cry and they play and they talk about finding fish in the supermarket. And…that’s what you need…. Just that …knowing that they have that deep experience of trauma and … to be in that atmosphere of … carrying on…joyfully and tearfully… altogether. … it was the only place I felt … ‘met’.

Through speaking of feeling “met” and being “altogether”, Ali constructs a “deep” emotional connection with the women at the level of being mothers “carrying on” through threat and trauma; additionally, Ali speaks of receiving something she needed from the women, that she couldn’t find “anywhere” else. In a similar way, within her own context of trauma, Beth expresses how she has experienced a sense of comfort and connection with the women:

> It’s been amazing to feel the link between their stories and my own … I suppose I know what it is to experience grief and quite traumatic situations…and instead of it being too much, I think it’s actually quite a comfort to hear their stories…I feel
less alone …even though they are women from a different place and their
experiences are very different…I really can feel the similarities between general
suffering… or love for their families or stories about their children and difficulties
or anger. All of these emotions are emotions that …I have too.

Beth constructs herself as simultaneously different to the displaced women and
connected to them. She builds a “link” through story at the level of feeling, trauma,
suffering and motherhood. She places the connection between herself and the women
as a source of comfort. As her narrative moves, Beth goes on to speak of the strength
she sees in the women and how through witnessing this strength, an awareness of her
own strength is reflected back:

I have just seen that they have the capacity, even though they have gone
through so much, they are continually going through so much … But despite all
that, they have…this amazing … inner strength to just still be joyous and
appreciating that they have a family and…they can still … enjoy life really. So, I
think from my point of view… it just … [B sounds tearful] makes me realise (. ) the
strength that we all have.

Beth starts by speaking about “they” and the women’s “inner strength”, locating the
strength inside the women and separate from herself. In the final sentence, she talks
about “we all”, an emotive recognition of her own strength in the face of adversity,
through connecting with the strength in the women.
The image reflected back through relationships with the women was not always comfortable. It often involved conflicting feelings, particularly when what was reflected back was a recognition of privilege. For example, Lynn speaks of the discomfort in coming to recognise the privilege of having a home:

*Hearing all of these stories… it just makes me realise how privileged I am to have a home… it’s opened my eyes to what it’s like for a lot of people in the world who don’t have that… I felt very ashamed… for quite a long time. And… embarrassed that I hadn’t even known that… I suppose I just had to come to terms with the fact that… it’s the luck of birth… And therefore… to appreciate it, to be grateful for it… and have the… head space and heart space to listen to other people and in some way share it.*

The phrase “opened my eyes” suggests seeing with more clarity. Lynn attaches feelings of shame and embarrassment as she comes to see herself as privileged. The final sentence suggests that having had her eyes opened, has also allowed her to open space for gratefulness, appreciation, listening and sharing.

My Story: A Reflexive Auto-ethnography

*Comfortably outside.*

As expressed in my auto-ethnographic interview: “I’m not a refugee or an asylum seeker… I’m not a mother”. I am a White-British, CP trainee and at the beginning of this
process, I was positioning myself on the ‘outside’ of the displaced women’s experiences. At the inception of the research, had I been asked who I was in relation to this work, I would have spoken of my feminism, the desire to illuminate the women’s strengths and ‘give voice’ to an experience that goes un-heard. In a similar way to the volunteers, I was positioning the displaced women as in need of my help and myself as the ‘outsider helper’.

**Uncomfortably inside.**

The conception of myself as an ‘outsider helper’ was uncomfortably challenged when I began building relationships with the women. In my auto-ethnographic interview, I speak about how this process began from my first meetings with the women:

*I was the one being welcomed in, I was from the outside, I was being welcomed in and the women…were wanting to look after me, so they were bringing me cups of tea…asking me how I was, they wouldn’t let me help.*

In this passage, I am speaking of how things were turned on their head, I was in the position of being welcomed and helped. The phrase “they wouldn’t let me” captures my sense of powerlessness and incapacity as my expected role is disrupted.

The de-construction of the ‘outsider helper’ role was a difficult one. Who I am in relation to the research was not straight-forward. I have not fled from a country where my life was in danger, but as I opened myself to the women and their experiences, I began to see my own experiences reflected back. I was in the process of making
meaning of my own trauma and grappling with nurturing roots of growth and potential motherhood. What I wanted to know from the women was deeply personal. This was a disturbing realisation, raising anxieties that I had uncovered a position of ‘over-identified insideness’ with the women.

**Growing reciprocally alongside.**

As I repeatedly stepped into discomfort, using reflexive spaces to examine the difficult feelings that arose, a space where strength, growth and development could be shared between myself and the women opened up. I could recognise the complex similarities and differences between myself and the women; I was neither ‘outside’ or ‘inside’, but ‘alongside’. There was also a growing appreciation of the reciprocity in the research process; I was both seeking meaning and providing a framework for it. The way this unfolded through the research revealed to me in a felt way the strength and growth of the women in the context of recognising my own strength and growth through the relationship with them.

**Discussion**

Within a wider objective of adding to a more nuanced understanding of displaced women’s experiences, this research set out to explore how women talk about their strength and growth in the context of mothering through displacement. The research also explored how those working with displaced women talk about their own strength and growth in the context of this work. The stories in this research, constructed strength and growth as processes of reciprocal meaning making within relationships: between displaced women and their children; displaced women and volunteers; displaced
women and myself as a researcher, and within the wider community of the women’s group.

**Relational Strength, Growth and Meaning Making**

PTG and vPTG theory understand growth as a process of meaning making following adversity (Arnold, Calhoun, Tedeschi, & Cann, 2005; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Consistent with Western cultural traditions from which these theories arise, meaning making has been organised primarily as individual and internal, with relationships positioned only as an enabling or constraining ‘backdrop’ to individual meaning making (Berger & Weiss, 2009; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Matos, Indart, Park & Leal, 2018). Within the stories in this research, relationships were more than a ‘backdrop’ to strength and growth, instead constructed as central to a reciprocal meaning making process. This is consistent with narrative and post-modern approaches in which the mutual construction of meaning in relationship is seen as fundamental to healing and growth; it is through relationship that we conceive of ourselves (Anderson, 2007; White & Epston, 1990).

**Growth and meaning making between displaced women and their children.**

The displaced women described complex lives of suffering, loving, growing and day-to-day living. Echoing previous findings, suffering and developments as women and mothers, represented two sides of the same coin (Kelly, Nel & Nolte, 2016). This is congruent with Tedeschi & Calhoun’s (2004) conceptualisation of PTG, in which they highlight the paradox that at a time of greatest struggle, there is the greatest strength
and growth. Consistent with previous research, women spoke of the necessity of surviving and staying strong for their children following displacement (Merry et al., 2017). But beyond survival, women constructed the relationships with their children as a reciprocal source of strength, growth and meaning making. Women spoke of how the mother-child relationship was a way of giving meaning to their suffering and purpose, direction and hope to their imagined futures.

Berger and Weiss (2009), argue that psychological growth following adversity is constructed between people, at the level of the family system, marked by processes such as changes in family belief systems and relationships. Berger and Weiss move from intra-psychic conceptualisations of growth and meaning making, viewing it as an interpersonal process ‘between’ people. The women’s stories in this research, connect intra-psychic meaning making with relationships between them and their children; constructing growth as both ‘within’ and ‘between’ themselves and their children.

**From ‘othering’ to mutual growth.**

Volunteer stories and my auto-ethnographic reflections described a process of de-constructing displaced women as ‘other’ and coming into empathic connection at the level of womanhood, motherhood and suffering. The narratives communicated a process of ‘mirroring’, in which the volunteers and I came to represent our own strengths and growth through how we saw ourselves reflected in the women’s stories.

The personally transformative and growthful consequences of working with the displaced women, echoes previous findings of vPTG in those working with displaced people (Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013). Concepts of PTG and vPTG are
organised in a way that is suggestive of two connected but separate individual processes (Arnold, Calhoun, Tedeschi, & Cann, 2005). In contrast, stories in this research constructed growth as a relational process. This is more congruent with conceptualisations of ‘vicarious resilience’ (VR) (Hernández, Engstrom & Gangsei, 2010).

VR describes positive consequences of working with trauma survivors, including experiencing personal strength, growth, and empowerment (Hernandez-Wolfe, Engstrom & Gangsei, 2015). Though it shares common elements with vPTG, reciprocity is foregrounded in VR, highlighting how trauma survivors and those bearing witness to their stories can be engaged in a mutually healing relationship (Hernández-Wolfe, 2018). Bratt (2019) re-frames VR as ‘reciprocal resilience’, highlighting the mutual, ‘interactive loop’, which may represent positive growth for each party; additionally, ‘reciprocal resilience’, highlights the importance of attunement and empathy, whereby, through ‘being with’ the ‘other’ on their journey to develop meaning from suffering, the reflective ‘self’ engages in a parallel introspective journey (Tassie, 2015). Descriptions of VR and ‘reciprocal resilience’ fit with volunteer narratives, ethnographic and autoethnographic observations, in which empathic connection as women and witnessing displaced women’s strength, growth and resilience prompted meaning making and recognition of personal strengths and empowerment. ‘Reciprocal resilience’ primarily refers to a relationship between two people. Beyond this, within the context of the women’s group, through the telling and enacting of stories “I” became “we”. Through Playback, meaning making through suffering was constructed at a shared level, generating a sense of community and empowerment as “women together”. This fits with
definitions of ‘psychological sense of community’, which denotes feelings of belonging to a larger collective, which can generate empowering processes relationally (Christens, 2012). This is also congruent with community conceptualisations of resilience and growth, which see individual growth as constructed in relationship with a larger collective (eg. Walsh, 2007).

**Implications**

**Clinical Implications**

BPS guidelines for working with refugees and asylum seekers highlight the strength, resilience and resource of displaced people (BPS, 2018). Beyond strength and resilience, the stories in this research construct growth and development through suffering, meaning making and relationship. BPS guidelines could be meaningfully updated to outline the possibility of psychological growth following displacement, which is currently not mentioned across the document.

In the stories in this research strength and growth were constructed as emergent through relationship. BPS guidance highlights familial relationships as a potential source of strength and resilience (BPS, 2018), and the value of relational approaches following displacement, such as work with families and communities have been previously documented (BPS, 2018; Walsh, 2007). Uniquely, in the stories told in this research strength and growth was co-constructed through reciprocal relationship. Reciprocal relational understandings of ‘growing together’ call for those working with displaced women and their children, to recognise the possibility for mutual growth in the mother child relationship. This reciprocal understanding also summons CPs to recognise
ourselves as part of a mutually influencing process of meaning making, where we too can grow and change (Hernández, Engstrom & Gangsei, 2010). Paying explicit attention to the reciprocal growth process in self, training and supervision mutually reinforces empowerment, opens avenues for change and creates a more empathic understanding of one another (Bratt, 2019; Hernández-Wolfe, 2018; Silveira & Boyer, 2015); therefore, bringing attention to processes of mutual growth and reciprocal resilience with displaced women is warranted and could be meaningfully incorporated into BPS guidelines. This includes paying reflexive attention to these processes in ourselves as clinicians, through provision of supervision, training and consultation to volunteers and community organisations.

**Methodological Implications**

My autoethnographic observations suggest that the research relationship can also be a place of mutual growth. This necessitated moving away from an ‘outsider’ stance, embracing use of self through reflexive autoethnography. CP has positivist roots, which may partially account for the lack of autoethnography in CP research. This research suggests that use of autoethnography in psychological research can provide precious insights and dismantle the ‘othering’ which often exists in the research field. This was particularly powerful in this context, given narratives of ‘otherness’ that surround displacement (Kirkwood, 2017); however, autoethnographic methodologies could equally be applied in more traditional mental health contexts to bridge the gap that power structures create between ‘patients’ and ‘professionals’, acknowledging the ‘self’ we bring to those contexts (Foster, McAllister & O’Brien, 2006).
Strengths and Limitations

This research makes a unique contribution in bringing to the fore women’s relational construction of growth, following displacement. The research calls into question a single story of displaced women as ‘traumatised victims’, lifting up non-dominant narratives of women’s strength and growth. Through the telling of a different story, the research has potentially empowering value for displaced women and those in relationship with them; however, caution needs to be exercised in making this claim because my empowering intentions do not necessarily translate into empowering outcomes and this can only really be judged by the women, volunteers and community involved (Riessman, 2008).

The research draws on multiple methods and viewpoints, which has allowed for a ‘thick description’ of women’s growth, with important insights being constructed from many-sided, complex stories. The use of ethnography also allowed for greater attention to the context in which stories were unfolding and for the development of relationships with the community over time. A limitation of including of multiple views and methods, is the challenge in weaving these together as a coherent ‘whole’, which may have prevented deeper exploration from one angle. There are many narrative threads within the stories which had to be dropped in the weaving together of these multiple parts.

It is important to consider how my own culturally bound understandings of growth influenced the overall story told. Although constructs such as PTG appear to be applicable across cultures, how growth is conceptualized may vary cross-culturally (Splevins, Cohen, Bowley, & Joseph, 2010). The way I have applied these constructs might differ from the ways in which the women themselves would have conceptualised
their own strength and growth. Given that all the displaced women I interviewed were speaking English as a second language, it is also possible, and even inevitable that some meanings will have been lost in translation. Though the stories were taken back to the women for comment, the research could have been strengthened by employing participatory methods and involving the women, volunteers and community, more fully in the analytic process.

From a narrative perspective, this write-up represents one partial, incomplete ‘truth’, co-constructed in context and relationship between myself, the women, the volunteers and now you, the reader. The central role of the researcher in interpreting meanings and re-telling stories makes reflexivity crucial and viewed by many as a key indicator of quality in qualitative research (Harper & Thompson, 2011). Therefore, a strength of the research is the deep engagement in reflexivity and careful thought about myself in relation to the women throughout the research process. The inclusion of an autoethnographic component makes transparent my feelings, position and process in the context of the research.

In summary, the research draws on multiple methods in a unique way to tell a novel story of women’s growth in the context of displacement. Ultimately, the value of the research will be socially constructed over time, by the women, volunteers, you the readers and the research community.

**Future Directions**

This research provides a starting point for thinking about the reciprocal, relational construction of psychological growth in the context displaced women’s lives; however,
further study would be valuable. Future research could further explore the reciprocal construction of psychological growth at multiple levels; between CPs, volunteers, community organisations supporting displaced people and displaced women and their relational communities. In particular, it would be useful to employ methods which allow for the study of what is happening between people, such as discourse analysis. For example, study of joint conversations between displaced women and those in relationship with them, to understand how growth is co-constructed relationally.

Summary and Conclusions

This research set out to investigate women’s strength and growth in the context of forced displacement. This incorporated an exploration of strength and growth between displaced women and their children, as well as how growth might extend to those working with displaced women, including myself as a researcher. This expanded on limited previous explorations of resilience in the context of mothering post-displacement and of vPTG in those working with displaced people. The unique finding of this research was women and volunteer’s co-construction of strength and growth, connecting intra-psychic meaning making to reciprocal relationships and wider community: linking what’s ‘within’ (‘I’) to what’s ‘between’ (‘we’). Consciously paying attention to this reciprocity in meaning making and growth has empowering connotations for displaced women and those in relationship with them. In the words of Huawa: “I can use what I have been through to plant words of hope and strength like seeds in the minds of others, that can germinate and grow there too.”
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Appendices

Appendix A: Reflexive Journal Extract

The Dangers of Re-enacting Colonialism and Strengthening the ‘victim’ Narrative- Reflections after seeing ‘The Jungle’

There has been more than a nagging concern in my mind about the possibility that I could fall into the trap of becoming the well-meaning, but privileged Westerner who is trying to ‘help’, whilst unwittingly over-powering, undermining and diminishing the resources of the women and community who have so kindly welcomed me. At no time has this felt more stark than when watching the immersive play ‘The Jungle’ about the Calais Refugee camp. In the play we saw how well-meaning volunteers flooded into the camp to ‘save the day’, without pausing to see, listen and understand how much resource and community was already present. This caused me deep discomfort and will be indelibly printed on my mind as I carry this work forwards.

Reflections from Women’s Group 11/19

Lots of themes around being alone- people walking by, not helping

Themes around separation and loss: particularly separation from children

One woman spoke movingly of how all of the women in the room had had difficult experiences, that we are women together and that as women we have the capacity to find strength within ourselves despite our circumstances. She spoke to women still waiting for their leave to remain (and waiting for this herself), expressing that the papers will come and they will be an additional something but that ‘we’ already have value without them and that this value won’t change whether there are papers or not. She went on to tell the other women that once they found this value within themselves, they would have value to other’s too, that they could also be a source of help and support.

“it’s a different sort of slavery” (speaking of being in the country with no status)

Spoke of how her faith helps her to feel connected to her son despite the separation.

I was very moved by this- here was a woman of who’s story I knew snippets- a story of trauma and pain-breaking down in the wake of trauma and separation. And yet here she was in these unimaginably painful circumstances giving such strength and wisdom to those of us in the room.

Outside, Inside or Alongside…? Finding my way…

Finding my position in the research and in relation to the women has been fraught with discomfort, fear, doubt and worry. I can recognise a gradual and fluctuating process that has been something like moving from a position of feeling like an ‘outsider’, to perhaps feeling too much ‘inside’ and a constant striving to find some middle ground. This has involved swimming in a hot ‘soup’, where it is difficult to see and submersion threatens… then gradually emerging into a ‘jungle’ where there are still some dark corners, but the path gradually unfolds …(and perhaps several movements between soup and jungle along the way!)

“There is no way to describe someone as a complete insider or an objective outsider in research” (Temple & Moran, 2011).
Not Belonging and Feeling an Outsider
When going to the women’s group I became aware of all sorts of creeping doubts and discomforts- what am I doing here? Am I being invasive? Am I invading this space and this community of women? Who am I when I am here- am I a researcher…a helper…a participant…? Who am I to be doing this research.. I’m not even a mother myself…I haven’t had the experience of being displaced from my home like these women have…? Then I started to become aware of how strongly I was feeling a sense of not belonging, of being an outsider- I realised how much these feelings were probably mirroring the feelings of the women I was with. I then set about thinking about my own remembered feelings and experiences of not belonging, which have perhaps unwittingly led me towards this work. This unpicking, as well as something one of the Playback actors said to me (“here we are all just women together”) allowed me to relinquish some of my hesitancy and step into the community and connect with the women more fully.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoX1exnk-Eg

Swimming in the Soup

…the relinquishment of doubts and hesitancy turned out to be short lived… as time went by and I was feeling more pressure to find women to meet and talk with… I started to fill up with anxiety… had I somehow gone from being too far on the ‘outside’ to stepping too much ‘inside’ this community? Was I going to have to make some sort of jarring transition from being a part of the women’s group, a participant, a friend even… back into a “researcher”? What if the women then feel manipulated or used somehow?

I feel stuck, fearful and deeply uncomfortable. Wrestling with my position in the research.

But perhaps I should feel uncomfortable…maybe it’s part creative process- maybe this means I am really engaged…
My Position: Walking Alongside in the Jungle

...as a sat in this ‘soup’ for a while a new sort of position began to emerge. I realised what I had been doing was trying to find a balance between ‘manipulative distance’ and ‘spurious identification’. Despite my desire to shake it, I think my own University context that favours a traditional, positivist, ‘objective’ view research had fed into a sudden worry that I had become ‘over involved’. But of course I am ‘involved’ and in relationship with these women otherwise how can I expect them to open up their lives to me. In the process of this work I am doing something together with the women... we are ‘walking in the jungle together’ - each of us bringing our own experiences, opinions, cultures and contexts and creating a unique context together in which a unique story will unfold.

Outside of objectivity and being with the complexity.

Not ‘data gathering’ but an interactive and unfolding ‘process’.

“My fear of forcing or manipulating individuals into discussing topics they did not want to talk about sometimes prevented me from giving women the space and permission to explore some of the deeper, more conflicted parts of their stories.” (Gluck & Patai, 1991).

Within the process I need to pay sharp attention to my own fears - particularly the fear of manipulation or intrusion - I need to be cautious that this does not create a hesitancy that shuts down important avenues of exploration for the women.

And....back into the soup!

‘Walking alongside in the jungle’ felt easier when thesis and VIVA deadlines were further away. Now deadlines seem to be looming large and I am feeling a great deal of conflict between this and being true to the women, going at their pace and being true to myself too. I am really struggling to approach women at women’s group, to think with them about telling their story - it feels I am asking so much from them, without feeling confident that I am offering them something helpful in return. This makes me feel somehow coercive and is utterly uncomfortable. I want so much just to be with these women without having to feel as though I need to ask them for something - it feels so much like this...like I am asking, scrounging, not offering.....It leaves me feeling full of doubt about the whole thing and like I want to hide away!

What drew me into this work?

“Go into yourself. Find out the reason that commands you to write; see whether it has spread its roots into the very depths of your heart” - Rainer Rilke
The answer to this question is complex, multi-layered and I think, still unfolding into consciousness. If I had been asked this question at the beginning of this journey, I think I would have talked about a feminist identity, and a desire to give voice to women’s experiences in all their fullness and complexity. I may have spoken of how this desire is borne out of my own experiences of growing up in a family where the voices of women and girls were shut down, made small or meaningless or ‘mad’ by being labelled as ‘hysterical’, ‘paranoid’ or ‘over-sensitive’. This of course is still true, however I am increasingly coming to know the other ‘layers’, which have drawn me into this particular work.

Coming from a position of my own story of trauma and abuse being hidden, un-heard and not believed for many years. As I moved into adulthood and did try to tell my story to others, I was often met by a mixture of disbelief (I didn’t ‘seem’ like somebody who had had that sort of experience) and pity (placing me in a ‘victim’ role, which seemed to shrink me into smallness). Therefore, it is not a coincidence that I embark on this work, seeking to uncover the fullness of women’s stories, both the pain and distress, but also the growth and strength. In parallel, I too am embarking on my own ‘work’ to uncover my personal story, to experience the full pain of it, but simultaneously opening up space for growth, creativity and connection. Perhaps I am looking to the women to give me hope in some way, so that I can see that they too have experiences of distress, pain and trauma and that these can co-exist with love, strength and courage.

“I am not defined by my scars but by my incredible ability to heal” - Lemn Sissay

I have increasingly become aware of the probable universality of feelings of displacement and not belonging- a sort of universal ‘refugeeness’ and not belonging. This was made particularly apparent to me when I attended an evening of Playback with the theme ‘Stories of Flight and Migration’. I looked at what seemed like a predominantly white British audience and naively doubted what stories of ‘flight and migration’ could be among us. But a rich tapestry of stories was woven that evening, stories of leaving home, stories of moving country and of seeking to find a place in the world. This made me think of my own ‘forced displacement’ experience, one of being moved without much warning from the community in which I had spent the first 7 years of my life, back into a nuclear family. This community had been my family and my support and I suddenly found myself completely dislocated and disconnected from them…

Perhaps we are all immigrants
Trading one home for another
First we leave the womb for air
Then the suburbs for the filthy city
In search of a better life
Some of us just happen to leave entire countries

-Rupi Kaur

There is also something about the ‘mothering’ aspect of the work. Again, it seems meaningful that as I seek to carry out this work, I am attempting to understand and re-make my relationship with my own mother- and part of this is to understand how it was for her to be a mother is very difficult circumstances. At the same time, I am considering the possibility of my own future motherhood, how it will be to be a mother when I feel dislocated from my own family and the community in which I was raised. Am I seeking to know something about my own difficult experience of being mothered and my capacity to be a mother?
I have come to realise that perhaps my reason for doing the research work is not as selfless and about being the ‘helper’ as I would like to believe. I too am looking for nourishment, wisdom and hope in the women’s stories. As I write, I am questioning whether part of my anxiety and discomfort in the process is that I am not only ‘helper’ or ‘researcher’ in this situation but I am also in the position of being ‘helped’..... this feels like a liminal state of being, I am betwixt and between roles of ‘helper and helped’. This means that there is a smaller distance between myself, my story and the women, their stories. There is not so much room for ‘othering’ and hiding my own painful experiences behind a ‘helper’ or ‘researcher’ mask- instead, each interaction with a woman means connecting to a similar place in my own experience.

“Obviously, a rigid, blinkered, absolutist world view is the easiest to keep hold of, whereas the fluid, uncertain, metamorphic picture I've always carried about is rather more vulnerable. Yet I must cling with all my might to … my own soul; must hold on to its mischievous, iconoclastic, out-of-step clown-instincts, no matter how great the storm. And if that plunges me into contradiction and paradox, so be it; I've lived in that messy ocean all my life. I've fished in it for my art. This turbulent sea was the sea outside my bedroom window in Bombay. It is the sea by which I was born, and which I carry within me wherever I go.” — Salman Rushdie

An auto-ethnographical part to the research and write-up detailing my parallel processes? – a parallel process of hearing women’s stories and drawing out counter narratives that don’t fit within dichotomous ‘victim’ ‘survivor’ narratives- whilst also grappling with making meaning of my own experiences as something more complex than ‘victim’ or ‘survivor’.

There is something about a danger of the women I am interviewing being ‘othered’ in the process and write-up of the research. During the time I have spent with the women, I have become aware of how much aspects of their experience reflect common aspects of human experience (not belonging, feeling alone, feeling displaced, mothering and being mothered, attempting to make meaning of experiences of suffering etc.). Although there is a uniqueness to the experience of being ‘forcibly displaced’ in this particular way and of navigating the asylum system- there is much in the stories that speak to the commonality of human experience and human suffering. It feels important to somehow be able to weave this into the write-up, to challenge the narratives around refugee/asylum seekers as somehow ‘other’.

“We have far more in common than that which divides us” – Jo Cox
Appendix B: Ethics Approval

From: ethics@exeter.ac.uk <ethics@exeter.ac.uk>
Sent: 15 April 2019 10:19
To: Holmyard, Lucy <lh610@exeter.ac.uk>
Cc: Smithson, Janet <J.Smithson@exeter.ac.uk>
Subject: Lucy Holmyard e-Ethics Application outcome decided (eCLESPsy000782 v4.3)

Dear Lucy Holmyard,

Application ID: eCLESPsy000782 v4.3
Title: Women's Stories of Living with the Challenges and Opportunities of Parenting in the Forced displacement Context

Your e-Ethics application has been reviewed by the CLES Psychology Ethics Committee.

The outcome of the decision is: **Favourable**

**Potential Outcomes**

| Favourable: | The application has been granted ethical approval by the Committee. The application will be flagged as Closed in the system. To view it again, please select the tick box: View completed |
| Favourable, with conditions: | The application has been granted ethical approval by the Committee conditional on certain conditions being met, as detailed below. Unless stated otherwise, please resubmit the requested amendments via the online system before beginning the research. |
| Provisional: | You have not been granted ethical approval. The application needs to be amended in light of the Committee's comments and re-submitted for Ethical review. |
| Unfavourable: | You have not been granted ethical approval. The application has been rejected by the Committee. The application needs to be amended in light of the Committee's comments and resubmitted / or you need to complete a new application. |

Please view your application [here](#) and respond to comments as required. You can download your outcome letter by clicking on the ‘PDF’ button on your eEthics Dashboard.

If you have any queries please contact the CLES Psychology Ethics Chair: Nick Moberly n.j.moberly@exeter.ac.uk

Kind regards,
CLES Psychology Ethics
Appendix C: Information sheets

Brief Info. Sheet: English

Listening to Women’s Stories

Your story matters.

Hello, my name is Lucy. I am from the UK and I am a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Exeter.

As part of my studies I am doing some research about women’s stories of mothering when they come to the UK to seek asylum.

I am looking to meet with you to hear your story of being a parent after arriving in the UK. This might include some of the struggles and difficulties, but also some of the ways in which you have learnt, grown or been proud of yourself along the way.

My hope is that sharing and exploring these stories together might allow difficult experiences to also be seen as something that you and your children have drawn strength and grown from. Hearing what it has been like for you might help other women who are having similar experiences.

If you would be interested in telling your story or want to know more, please ask me or get in touch by email lh610@exeter.ac.uk.

Warm wishes,

Lucy
الاستماع إلى قصص النساء

قصصك تهمنا

مرحبا، اسمي لوسي وأنا متدربة بريطانية في جامعة أكستر في مجال علم النفس السريري.

أقام الآن كجزء من دراستي ببحث في قصص النساء حول تربية الأبناء بعد ما يصل إلى بريطانيا طالبين اللجوء.

أريد أن تحكي لنا قصصك عن الأمومة بعد وصولك إلى بريطانيا. قد تشمل ذلك بعض التفاصيل والمشاعر التي واجهتها، ولكنها تشتمل أيضًا بعض الأشياء التي تعلنتها أو كيف تطورت شخصيًا من خلال التجربة أو اللحظات التي كنتي فخورة بذلك فيها.

أتمنى أن تشاركنا في قصصك بعض الأمثلة تعبر عن هذه التجربة السمعية كشيء أتى أو أرادتك. استمتعنا الفهو منها وتعمقنا بشخصها. بالإضافة إلى ذلك قد يساعدك قصصك نشر أحلامك وتجاربك لبعض النساء الأخريات والتي ترغبن في التجربة مشابهة.

إذا كنتي مهتمة بمشاركة قصصك أو إذا كنتي ترغبين معرفة المزيد عن الدراسة، فيرجى قم بطلب ذلك مني أو الاتصال بي عبر البريد الإلكتروني التالي.

lh610@exeter.ac.uk

مع أطيب تحياتي,

لوسي
Full Information Sheet (Women)

STUDY TITLE: LISTENING TO WOMEN’S STORIES OF MOTHERING IN THE CONTEXT OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT TO THE UK

Invitation and summary
You are being invited to take part in some research about women’s experiences of being a parent in the UK whilst going through the asylum process. As part of this research, Lucy would like to meet with you to hear your story of being a mother during this time. Please take the time to consider the information carefully. You can discuss this with friends, family or START members of staff if you wish.

Who is doing the research?
This is Lucy Holmyard. Lucy is a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Exeter. She is doing the research as part of her training with the University.

Why are we doing the research?
We know that women who are seeking asylum are faced with lots of challenges, but we also know that they show great strength in the face of these challenges. The purpose of the research is to explore how women live with the challenges of parenting during the uncertain time of waiting for an asylum outcome. Hearing what it has been like for you might add to our understanding of what might help others to live with similar challenges.

Why have I been invited to take part?
You have been invited to take part because you are a woman and a mother. You have also been asked because you have been through the process of seeking asylum in the UK.

Do I have to take part?
No. It is your choice. It is up to you whether you choose to take part or not. Whether you choose to take part will not affect the support you receive.

What if I want to take part but I don’t speak English?
If you would like to take part but don’t speak English, we can think about using an interpreter so that you are able to take part in the study.

What will taking part involve?

Lucy will arrange a time to meet with you to explain more about the study and you can ask any questions you might have.

Lucy will need to confirm that you are happy to take part and will ask you to sign a consent form.

You will be invited to meet with Lucy and tell your story of being a parent whilst waiting for an asylum outcome. This will take about 60-90 minutes. This could be at your home or another location depending on where you feel most comfortable. The conversation will be audio recorded.

After you have told you story, Lucy will spend some time with you thinking about what it was like to talk about your experiences and to make sure that you are okay.

Lucy will type up what you have told her. She will then invite you to meet with her again to think about your story and the parts that are most important to you. She will give you a copy of your story to keep.
What will happen if I don’t want to carry on with the study?
You can tell Lucy that you do not want to carry on with the study anytime until April 2020 without having to give any reason. If you decide you want to stop before or during the interview, you can tell Lucy directly. If you decide that you do not want your story to be included in the study after the interview, you can let Lucy know by email (contact details below). Once the thesis is passed, all consent forms, questionnaires, audio files and transcription of interviews will be destroyed.

What will happen after I have told my story?
- Lucy will write down exactly what you told her.
- Lucy will contact you to see if you are happy to meet again. If you are happy to, Lucy would like to meet with you to think together about some of the themes (important messages and ideas) in your story. You will also be given a written copy of your story to keep if you want it.
- Lucy will look at your story and the stories of other women who have taken part to see what the similarities and differences in the stories are.
- Lucy will then write about the themes (important messages and ideas) from the stories of all the women she interviews.

What will happen to the findings of the study?
At the end of the study Lucy hopes to meet with you and other women who have taken part to talk about what was found. We will think together about how we can let others know what was found too. Lucy will also be writing the findings of the study up for her University course and will submit the report to some journals for publication.

How will my personal details be kept private?
The University of Exeter uses personal data for the purposes of carrying out research. The University will try to be open about its processing of your personal data and this information sheet should provide a clear explanation of this. If you do have any questions or concerns about the University’s use of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University’s Data Protection Officer by emailing dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk or at www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection

- Lucy will record your story on an encrypted (using a code) and password-protected Dictaphone (audio recording device). Within 24 hours after the interview, Lucy will save the recording of your story onto a password protected computer and the recording will be deleted from the Dictaphone. The computer will be stored in a lockable cabinet, separate to any identifiable personal details such as signed consent forms. Consent forms will be scanned onto the password protected computer and stored separately from transcripts. Paper copies of consent forms will be destroyed.
• You will be given a pseudonym (a different name) which will be used from the point that the recording is put onto a computer. This pseudonym will be used on all records instead of your real name to make sure it is kept private.

• Your story will be given a code linking it to your personal details. This is in case you want to withdraw your story from the study. This code will be stored in a separate password protected folder to the audio recording and transcript of your story.

• None of your personal details (like your name and where you live) will be included when Lucy writes down your story. This is so your story is kept private.

• Once the research is passed, all consent forms, audio files and transcription of interviews will be destroyed.

• Data will be stored securely and kept for a maximum of 5 years. Data will be destroyed by deleting electronic files where it will be stored.

• Your contact details (telephone number/email address) will be gathered at the start of the study. This is so Lucy can contact you to give you a transcript of your story, to be involved in looking at the themes in your story and to share the outcomes of the work with you. Contact details will be kept in a password protected folder, separate to the audio recording and transcript of your story.

• The only time Lucy would need to share any information about you, is if she is worried that you or somebody else might be at risk of harm. If this happened, she would need to let her supervisor and your Keyworker at START know.

**What might be good about taking part?**

We cannot promise that the study will help you directly. But there might be some good things about taking part:

• We know that it can be helpful to talk about painful experiences. Sometimes this can help us to find strength and growth from these experiences.
• Your story might help others to understand what might help other women to overcome similar challenges.

**What might be not so good about taking part?**

• Some of the things we talk about might make you feel upset. Before you share your story, we will think together about what might help you if you feel upset. When telling your story, we can stop or take a break at any time. We will also have a talk after you share your story to check that you are feeling okay. You will
also be able to speak with a START member of staff if you are feeling upset after
taking part in the study.
• Being part of the study will take up some of your time.

Will travel costs be paid?
Yes. You will be given back any money you spend on travel whilst taking part in the
study.

What if there is a problem?
If you have any worries about the study or want to complain about how you have been
treated, you can contact Lucy’s supervisor, Janet Smithson or the ethics committee at
the University of Exeter (contact details below). If you feel unable to do this, you can
speak to START, who will be able to support you to speak with Janet or Gail.

Contact details
If you are interested in taking part or have any questions, please contact Lucy.

Lucy Holmyard (Trainee Clinical Psychologist):
Email: lh610@exeter.ac.uk

Dr. Janet Smithson- Study supervisor and contact if complaints:
Email: j.smithson@exeter.ac.uk
Address:
Washington Singer Laboratories
University of Exeter
Perry Road
Prince of Wales Road
Exeter
EX4 4QG
UK

Dr. Nick Moberly- Psychology Ethics Committee
Email: n.j.moberly@exeter.ac.uk

Gail Seymour- Research Ethics and Governance Manager
Email: g.m.seymour@exeter.ac.uk
01392 726621
Invitation and summary
You are being invited to take part in some research about women’s strength and growth as mothers in the context of forced displacement. I am interested in the impact on you of your work with women who have been forcibly displaced and the extent to which you might have learnt, grown and developed through your work.

You are being invited to take part in the study because you are a START member of staff, student or volunteer who has worked directly with women who have been forcibly displaced with their children. As part of this research, I would like to meet with you to hear your story of working with and learning from the women. Please take the time to consider the information carefully.

Who is doing the research?
My name is Lucy Holmyard, I am a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Exeter and I am doing the research as part of my training. I have been involved with START as part of the research since 2018.

At the beginning of this research I only intended to draw on the stories of the women themselves. However, as I have embarked on the process of doing the research it has been my experience that working with the women has been a source of growth and development for me too. Therefore, I have become interested in how others might learn, grow and develop through working with the women.

Why am I doing the research?
We know that women who are forcibly displaced are faced with lots of challenges and vulnerabilities, but you will know through your work that the women also show great strength in the face of this.
The primary purpose of the research is to explore how women find strength and grow as mothers through the upheaval of forced displacement.

I aim to draw on a combination of women’s stories and staff/student/volunteer stories to challenge dominant ideas of refugee women as ‘helpless victims’. This is important because the ‘helpless-victim’ narrative holds forcibly displaced women within a framework of vulnerability and powerlessness, disqualifying their strength and growth in the face of adversity. These social narratives impact the stories women can tell themselves and others and the subsequent meaning they make of their experiences. Therefore, shining a light on the strength, growth and development that co-occur alongside vulnerability and suffering, offers a different way for the women themselves and systems working with the women, to make sense of these experiences.

**Why have I been invited to take part?**
You have been invited to take part because you are a staff member, student or volunteer who has worked with forcibly displaced women at START.

**Do I have to take part?**
No, it is your choice whether or not you take part in the project.
What will taking part involve?

I will arrange a time to meet with you or speak on the phone to explain more about the study and you can ask any questions you might have.

I will need to confirm that you are happy to take part and will ask you to sign a consent form.

You will be invited to meet with me and tell your story of working with the women. This will take between 45-90 minutes depending on how long you speak for. The conversation will be audio recorded.

I will type a word for word transcription of our conversation, which I will send to you by email. I will then invite you to meet with me again to think through the important themes in your story.
What will happen if I don’t want to carry on with the study?
You can let me know that you do not want to carry on with the study anytime until April 2020 without having to give any reason. If you decide you want to stop before or during the interview, you can tell me directly. If you decide that you do not want your story to be included in the study after the interview, you can let me know by email (contact details below). Once the thesis is passed, all consent forms, questionnaires, audio files and transcription of interviews will be destroyed.

What will happen after I have told my story?
- I will type up a word for word transcription of your story, which I will send to you by email. You will have a chance to read through the transcription and let me know if there is anything I have not captured or if there is anything you would like to add.
- Once you have read a copy of your story, I will invite you to meet with me again. If you are happy to, we will arrange a time to meet to think about how it was to read your story and to discuss the important themes arising from it.
- I will look at your story alongside the stories of other staff, students and volunteers, my own story and the women’s stories to identify common themes, similarities and differences.
- I will be writing up the findings of the project as an academic paper, which will be submitted initially in early September 2020.

What will happen to the findings of the project?
At the end of the project, I will think with START and those of you involved about how we can use the findings to feed back into the work at START. I will also be submitting the findings for academic publication. I will produce a summary of the findings, which I will send to those involved in the project and I can send you the full academic report upon request.

How will my personal details be kept private?
The University of Exeter uses personal data for the purposes of carrying out research. The University will try to be open about its processing of your personal data and this information sheet should provide a clear explanation of this. If you do have any questions or concerns about the University’s use of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University’s Data Protection Officer by emailing dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk or at www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection

- Your story will be recorded on an encrypted and password-protected Dictaphone. Within 24 hours after the interview, the recording will be saved onto a password protected computer and will be deleted from the Dictaphone. The computer will be stored in a lockable cabinet, separate to any identifiable personal details such as signed consent forms. Consent forms will be scanned onto the password protected computer and stored separately from transcripts. Paper copies of consent forms will be destroyed.
• You will be given a pseudonym which will be used from the point that the recording is put onto a computer. This pseudonym will be used on all records instead of your real name to make sure it is kept private.

• Your story will be given a code linking it to your personal details. This is in case you want to withdraw your story from the study. This code will be stored in a separate password protected folder to the audio recording and transcript of your story.

• None of your personal details will be included in the transcription of your story or the final write-up.

• Once the research is passed, all consent forms, audio files and transcription of interviews will be destroyed.

• Data will be stored securely and kept for a maximum of 5 years. Data will be destroyed by deleting electronic files where it will be stored.

• Your contact details will be gathered at the start of the study. This is so I can contact you to give you a transcript of your story, to be involved in looking at the themes in your story and to share the outcomes of the work with you. Contact details will be kept in a password protected folder, separate to the audio recording and transcript of your story.

• The only time I would need to share any information is if there was a concern that you or someone else was at risk of harm. In this instance, where possible, I would speak to you first about my concerns and the need to break confidentiality.

What might be good about taking part in the project?
We cannot promise that the study will help you directly. But there might be some good things about taking part:

• Talking through your story will offer a space to think reflectively about your work with the women. This might be an opportunity to make meaning of these experiences and to think about your own learning and growth during this process.

• More widely, your story might contribute to challenging the dominant negative discourses around forcibly displaced women.

What might be less good about taking part in the project:
• There is an inevitable time commitment involved in taking part in the project.
• It is possible that talking about your work with the women could arouse strong feelings.
Will travel costs be paid?
Yes. You will be given back any money you spend on travel whilst taking part in the study.

What if there is a problem?
If you have any worries about the project or want to complain about how you have been treated, you can contact my supervisor, Janet Smithson or the ethics committee at the University of Exeter (contact details below).

Contact details
If you are interested in taking part or have any questions, please get in contact.

Lucy Holmyard (Trainee Clinical Psychologist):
Email: lh610@exeter.ac.uk

Dr. Janet Smithson- Study supervisor and contact if complaints:
Email: j.smithson@exeter.ac.uk
Address:
Washington Singer Laboratories
University of Exeter
Perry Road
Prince of Wales Road
Exeter
EX4 4QG
UK

Dr. Nick Moberly- Psychology Ethics Committee
Email: n.j.moberly@exeter.ac.uk

Gail Seymour- Research Ethics and Governance Manager
Email: g.m.seymour@exeter.ac.uk
01392 726621
Appendix D: Consent Forms

Women

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Listening to Women's Stories of Parenting in the Context of Forced displacement to the UK

Name of Researcher: Lucy Holmyard

University of Exeter Ethics ID: eCLESPsy000782 v4.3

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated April 2019 version number 2.0 for the above project. I have been given time to think about whether I want to take part and ask questions.

2. I understand that it is my choice whether I take part in the study and that I can change my mind at any time without giving Lucy a reason.

3. I understand that my choice to take part or not, will not affect the support I receive.

4. I understand that the study might involve talking about some upsetting experiences.

5. I understand that my story may be looked at by members of the research team and people from the University of Exeter who work with Lucy.

6. I understand that taking part involves audio recordings which will be deleted after Lucy has written these up.
7. I understand that taking part involves my story being written up under a pseudonym (using a different name) which will be used in the write up of the study.

8. I agree that my contact details can be kept securely and used by researchers from the research Team to contact me about with the outcomes of the study.

9. I agree to take part in the study.

__________________________  __________________________  __________________________
Name of Participant           Date                          Signature

__________________________  __________________________  __________________________
Name of researcher taking consent Date                          Signature

When completed: 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher/project file
STAFF, STUDENT and VOLUNTEERS CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: **LISTENING TO WOMEN’S STORIES OF STRENGTH AND GROWTH IN THE CONTEXT OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT**

Name of Researcher: **Lucy Holmyard**

University of Exeter Ethics ID: **eCLESPsy000782 v4.3**

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated February 2020 version number 1 for the above project. I have been given time to think about whether I want to take part and ask questions.

2. I have read and understood the information on the supplementary information sheet about taking part in an interview over skype/phone and I consent to taking part in the interview remotely.

3. I understand that it is my choice whether I take part in the study and that I can change my mind at any time without giving Lucy a reason.

4. I understand that the study will involve talking about my experiences of working with forcibly displaced women, which might evoke strong feelings.

5. I understand that my story may be looked at by members of the research team and people from the University of Exeter who work with Lucy.

6. I understand that taking part involves audio recordings which will be deleted after Lucy has written these up.

7. I understand that taking part involves my story being written up under a pseudonym (using a different name) which will be used in the write up of the study.
8. I agree that my contact details can be kept securely and used by researchers from the research Team to contact me about with the outcomes of the study.

9. I agree to take part in the study.

_________________________   ________________________   ________________________
Name of Participant          Date                        Signature

_________________________   ________________________   ________________________
Name of researcher           Date                        Signature
taking consent

When completed: 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher/project file
De-brief Sheet

STUDY TITLE: LISTENING TO WOMEN’S STORIES OF STRENGTH AFTER FORCED DISPLACEMENT TO THE UK

Thank you for sharing your story.
I know that sharing your personal story can be difficult. I really appreciate your courage in sharing your story.

What do I do if I am feeling distressed after sharing my story?
Sharing your story can be helpful but it can also bring up difficult feelings. If you are struggling with difficult feelings, you can talk this through with me if that feels comfortable or seek support from your START Key Worker.

What happens now?

- I will write down exactly what you told me.
- I will contact you to see if you are happy to meet again. If you are happy and able to, I would like to meet with you to think together about some of the themes (important messages and ideas) in your story. You will also be given a written copy of your story to keep if you want it.
- I will look at your story and the stories of other women who have taken part to see what the similarities and differences in the stories are.
- I will then write about the themes (important messages and ideas) from the stories of all the women I have interviewed.
What will happen when the study is finished?
At the end of the study I hope to meet with you and other women who have taken part to talk about what was found. We will think together about how we might let others know what was found too. I will also be writing the findings of the study up for my University course and will submit the report to some journals for publication.

What if there is a problem?
If you have any worries about the study or want to complain about how you have been treated, you can contact my supervisor, Janet Smithson, Gail Seymour or Nick Moberly (contact details below). If you feel unable to do this, you can speak to START, who will be able to support you to speak with Janet, Nick or Gail.

Contact Details
If you have any questions or concerns, please get in contact.

Lucy Holmyard (Trainee Clinical Psychologist):
Email: lh610@exeter.ac.uk

Dr. Janet Smithson- Study supervisor and contact if complaints:
Email: j.smithson@exeter.ac.uk
Address:
Washington Singer Laboratories
University of Exeter
Perry Road
Prince of Wales Road
Exeter
EX4 4QG
UK

Dr. Nick Moberly- Psychology Ethics Committee
Email: n.j.moberly@exeter.ac.uk

Gail Seymour- Research Ethics and Governance Manager
Email: g.m.seymour@exeter.ac.uk
01392 726621
Thank you.
Thank you for taking the time to share your story and experiences of working with forcibly displaced women. Your story is a really important and valuable part of this project.

What happens now?
- I will type up a word for word transcription of your story, which I will send to you by email. You will have a chance to read through the transcription and let me know if there is anything I have not captured or if there is anything you would like to add.
- Once you have read a copy of your story, I will invite you to meet with me again. If you are happy to, we will arrange a time to meet to think about how it was to read your story and to discuss the important themes arising from it.
- I will look at your story alongside the stories of other staff, students and volunteers, my own story and the women’s stories to identify common themes, similarities and differences.
- I will be writing up the findings of the project as an academic paper, which will be submitted initially in early September 2020.

What will happen when the study is finished?
At the end of the project, I will think with START and those of you involved about how we can use the findings to feed back into the work at START. I will also be submitting the findings for academic publication. I will produce a summary of the findings, which I will send to those involved in the project and I can send you the full academic report upon request.

What if there is a problem?
If you have any worries about the study or want to complain about how you have been treated, you can contact my supervisor, Janet Smithson, Gail Seymour or Nick Moberly (contact details below).

Contact Details
Please get in contact with me if you have any questions, concerns or queries that you would like to talk through further.

Lucy Holmyard (Trainee Clinical Psychologist):
Email: lh610@exeter.ac.uk

Dr. Janet Smithson- Study supervisor and contact if complaints:
Email: j.smithson@exeter.ac.uk
Address:
Washington Singer Laboratories
University of Exeter
Perry Road
Prince of Wales Road
Exeter
EX4 4QG
UK

Dr. Nick Moberly- Psychology Ethics Committee
Email: n.j.moberly@exeter.ac.uk

Gail Seymour- Research Ethics and Governance Manager
Email: g.m.seymour@exeter.ac.uk
01392 726621
Appendix F: Additional Information for Remote Interviewing

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION - SKYPE/TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Due to the current situation with COVID-19 I am currently unable to meet with you face-to-face. However, if you are happy to, we can have a recorded conversation over Skype or telephone. Below are some further details about how this works so that you can make a decision whether this is something that will feel okay for you.

Ensuring a private setting

- I will ensure that I am entering into the conversation in a private room where our conversation cannot be overheard.
- I am aware that in the current circumstances being confined to our homes, you might be sharing your space with others. However, where possible, it is helpful if you can find a quiet, private space with as few distractions as possible.

How does it work?

Skype:

- I will create an account with Skype for Business. If you choose to participate in the study, I will request that you create an account with Skype and I will request to link with your account.
- We will agree beforehand whether you would like the video link turned on or off during the conversation.
- We will arrange a time to meet on Skype, and we will both need to be signed into skype at this time. I will then call you at the pre-arranged time.
- If one or both of us is having difficulties establishing a connection, we will notify each other by email.
- Once we are connected, there will be time to ask any additional questions and then I will ask you if it is okay to begin recording the conversation using a Dictaphone.
- Once the research study has been submitted to the University of Exeter as part of my Doctoral Research project, I will remove all participants’ details from this Skype for business account and the account will be closed.
- It is important to inform you that in order to protect users and to prevent sharing of illegal or inappropriate material ‘Skype reserves the right to review content submitted on or through the Software, Products and Skype Websites for the purpose of enforcing these Terms’. However, this should not be an issue for the purpose of this research study.
Telephone:

- If you choose to take part in a conversation over the telephone, we will agree this by email and you will let me know which is the best telephone number to contact you on.
- We will agree a time for our call over email and I will call you at this pre-arranged time.
- At the beginning of the call there will be some time for some informal talk and time to ask any additional questions before we start the recorded part of the interview.
- I will then ask you if it is okay to begin recording the conversation using a Dictaphone.
Appendix G: Narrative Interview Questions

Narrative Question for the Women

Could you tell me as much as you can about what it has been like bringing up your children since arriving in the UK? You could think about any challenges you have faced as a mother during this time and whether there is anything that has helped you through these. It might be helpful to think about what it was like when you first arrived and how that has changed or stayed the same over time.*

Narrative Question for Students/Staff

Starting where you like, can you tell me as much as you can about your experiences of working with refugee women and their children and how you feel that you have changed, learnt or grown in the process of this work?

*NOTE: this is now not the question I would ask if I was re-embarking on the research or interviewing more women.
Appendix H: Extract of Auto-ethnographic Interview

I: Can you tell me as much as you can about your experience of working with refugee women with children, and how you feel that you have changed, grown or learnt in the process of this work?

LH: (. ) Okay, erm (. ) I just said that I was feeling, I was feeling [LH quiet laughter], I was feeling err a bit nervous and anxious about this, and I think that’s because it feels that there’s been so many different layers and it’s quite complicated. And there’s something about this, doing an interview like this that that feels like erm I need to capture everything in one, in one go and I, yeah, I wonder what that, erm, I wonder whether that’s been the same for the women that I’ve interviewed I guess (...) anyway that’s probably a different story erm [LH brief laughter]. Um so (. ) I think um a lot of the learning has been um through the process, I guess, of being in relationship with the women and how that’s changed, how my way of relating to that has changed over time. So I think when I, at the beginning of the research, I, erm, I probably had a bit of a notion that I was, I was doing something helpful, that I was being a kind of ‘helper’ and erm, I was, erm, I wanted to give voice to the women’s experiences and that they often didn’t have a platform for their voices to be heard. Erm, so I think I was positioning myself like err, as ‘a helper’ err, but also, also very much on the outside of their experience, not inside it. Err I, I’m not a refugee or an asylum seeker, erm, I’m not a mother, so I, I, yeah, I positioned myself very much outside of that. And I guess because, I think in our, in our jobs erm in clinical psychology, we’re very much in the ‘helper’ role. Erm, so I think, yeah, lots of things contributed to that, but I think that’s how I went in and umm [LH smiling] immediately that idea was completely disrupted. Erm and so going to the women’s group and going to XXXXX [name of regular refugee community gathering] and, and there, I was the one being welcomed in, I was from the outside, I was being welcomed in and the women were erm, were wanting to look after me, so they were bringing me cups of tea, they were yeah, asking me how I was, they wouldn’t let me help [LH
laughter] and I, I felt really um, it felt really difficult and really sort of, I don’t know um (.) yeah it, it felt really uncomfortable, and it feels embarrassing now talking about how uncomfortable it was. But I think then I would do things like erm, err, trying to be helpful by setting out the chairs or putting them away, which wasn’t really my role at all. That wasn’t why I was there. But there was something about needing to be ‘the helper’ which was really, really powerful. Erm and, and I, I think through that process, as I was going through that process, I felt so anxious all the time about going to the groups and being in that environment where I felt, I felt helpless actually. I didn’t and I didn’t feel that I had a role and I kept asking myself well, you know, who am I to be doing this research? I’m not, I’m not erm a refugee, I haven’t had this experience, I’m not even a Mum, what am I doing here? Umm and then I think gradually, err, through, I don’t really know how, but gradually erm I, I started to, as I, I think possibly it was a lot, a lot through the women’s group and hearing their stories in the context of Playback, that made me realise that although I wasn’t, I hadn’t come from war or hadn’t had that experience and that I hadn’t been forcibly displaced in that sense erm, there was lots in what they were talking about in terms of their experiences, which really resonated. So, erm, yeah (.) and then, and then I started to really look at, what are the similarities here, between me and these women? And actually, I am here doing this research, why am I doing it? What is the significance, not just, erm, not just to them, but what’s the significance to me? And um, there was a point at which I started thinking about, erm, experiences where I’d felt kind of, um (.) displaced, and I even, I felt so uncomfortable at the time even thinking about those, because how could they, how could they be comparable? And that still feels (.) it still feels a bit uncomfortable now. But things like, so when I was 7 or 8 moving from, I lived on a commune, um, so moving from that setting, where, where there were lots of adults who I felt safe with and I used those other adult relationships to kind of resource me when things at home weren’t okay. To then being kind of ‘displaced’ into this middle-of-nowhere house without any of those relationships being there. And there was something about, I mean, I hadn’t thought about that in those terms until I was in relationship with these women.
And also, also thinking about, well why, what about motherhood, why is that important? And, you know, I'm not, I'm not a mother and then I realised, well maybe I'm wanting to know something from the women. That actually, I am thinking about becoming a Mum, but I, I, there's a, there's a (.) there's a sense of separation or displacement I guess from my own Mum and my own parents and also from the community where I grew up and did feel a sense of belonging.

Um and so, I think, I was wanting or I have been wanting to find out something from the women, so I felt, I sort of thought, perhaps I've got something to learn actually, beyond the context of um, well maybe not beyond the context of a research project but, there was something really personal about what I wanted to learn and why I was doing it. Erm and (.) and as I (.) um, as I sort of was [quiet laughter from LH] going through these processes of realising the connections um, the, it felt really terrifying and again really uncomfortable because suddenly I thought um, perhaps I'm, I'm, I don't know, perhaps I'm just on some sort of self, self-discovery journey [LH laughs] and that doesn’t, that doesn’t feel okay. So, again I really wanted to, to hide away and it was really hard being, being erm among the women I think, at that point when I was having all these discoveries about why it was I was doing this research. Erm and then I think, um, also I, there was something about, um (..) maybe in some way feeling small, small in relation to the women and seeing them as almost extraordinary or something and err, you know, hearing everything that they had experienced, and how they were raising their children still in the context of that and um, so I felt sort of, yeah, somehow small in relation to them and like my own experiences were so small and unimportant and (..) And then something else shifted and, and I'm not really sure how, how things kept shifting but I think probably partly because I was constantly looking at it and thinking ‘what's going on here?’. Um. But I, something shifted from being kind of, from being, from feeling I was completely ‘on the outside’, to feeling ‘oh my god I am way too much in this’, to feeling more like, okay, I do have, I have something to learn from these women, they are kind of helping me in an way, but I also have something to, to offer them and that it, it felt more of a kind of process of erm, sort of a reciprocal helping and learning and
growing rather than, rather than one or the other. And actually, I was thinking this morning that I
(.) I wonder whether um (.) I don't know, I think that often in our jobs, we don’t really recognise
erm (.) always, how we personally might grow from the interactions (I: Yep) that we have with
our patients and the work that we do with them. There’s something about the role we often
place ourselves in, which is kind of ‘outside’, ‘an outsider helper’, rather than something more
human and reciprocal, with learning and growing on both sides of the relationship. And then I
was thinking about that in the context of kind of, strength and growth and how actually, um (.)
maybe in positioning ourselves on the outside as ‘an outside helper’, we’re sort of denying the
person from seeing their full strength and growth, because they can’t see (I: Yeah), how we, the
reciprocation. Erm and I think, then it was important for me to be to be really open with the
women and say to them, you know, “I’ve got something to learn from you”. When I think early on
in the process erm, I mean the women were always keen to know about, all the women I spoke
to were keen to know about whether I had children, which is, um, really obvious that they would
want to know that, because that’s what I’m looking at so they want to know who I am in relation
to them and in relation to what I’m doing. Um and early on I felt really uncomfortable in
answering that, and, and then later on in the process I felt like I could be more honest and open.
Like I could say, erm, “I don’t have children, but I’m hoping to and I’m thinking about it, but I
have some fears about it, and I’m sure that I’d have lots to learn from you about what that’s
like”. And often, they would, the women would really enjoy telling me about when I should have
children [I and LH laughter] or, or what might help, or what helps with breast feeding, you know
they were, I could see them really light up in those moments where they were able to kind of,
offer me some advice as a woman who had been through something that I haven’t been through
yet. (..) Yeah so, so in terms of what I’ve learnt, um, I guess a lot of it is about how strength and
growth happens in relationship and in reciprocation, it’s reciprocal. And there’s also something I
think about, about, community that I’ve learnt. So, in terms of that question about how a woman
develops strength and growth as a mother in the context of forced displacement. Um, which
was, I thought was a kind of ‘out there, outside of me’ question but actually is also an ‘inside of me’ question. That err, that there’s something really important about community and relationships. And although most of these women are kind of separated from their, from their Mums, which they would talk about quite a lot, um, that they formed relationships with one another and erm, would tell me, you know “we don’t have family here so we’re like, you know, she’s like my auntie or she’s like my Mum” or(.) And that made me think about those sorts of relationships in my own life as well where, you know, it might not be my Mum, but there are other people who I have those sorts of maybe, mother-daughter relationships with. So um, yeah, so there’s something about that and about how reciprocation and strength through reciprocation was demonstrated not just, not just through words but through things like, often the sharing of food and things like that, so. Or (.) yeah so, the sharing of food and making of drinks for other people and um, and (...) I’m just, there’s lots of things in my mind, erm, I’m trying to think about which way to go. But so I was thinking about what I was saying earlier about, about how, about the importance of community and things like seeing at women’s group and at the XXXX [refugee community group] how um, there could be a Mum who was struggling with a toddler who was having a tantrum or erm or a little boy who didn’t want to eat his food and all the, all the mothers would rally round to kind of, help with the tantrumming toddler, or to try and cajole the child into eating the food. So, it was like not being just, it was like there wasn’t just one Mum, there was lots [I laughs then LH laughs] altogether. Erm, which I guess, I don’t know, I haven’t thought about this before but I’m just thinking about it now, quite, is quite reflective of my experience growing up on a commune. Erm. So yeah. And I think, I think also there’s something about um, development over time and strength sort of unfolding over time. Being with that, that group of women over a period of a couple of years and um seeing how some of the women who, there’s one woman in particular who comes to mind, she was really, really shy and really quiet and really struggled with her English and would often need her children to translate for her and you could see how difficult that was. Um and then
thinking about, yeah, how she was then compared to more recently, in the last few months, how she’s really mastering the language and how one of the last XXXX [refugee community event] I attended, there was a new family who had just arrived. And it was this woman who had been really shy and quiet to begin with, who, who gave them a big hug and welcomed them in and sat them down and told them all about how things work here. And um, so again it’s about, there’s something about reciprocation. So, someone would have done that for her when she was feeling maybe new and vulnerable and, and now she’s able to do that for somebody else. So.

Yeah. (…).
Appendix I: Story Summary Example- Lynn

I had a tool. I had a process. I would help people.
I started off with an idea that I had a tool, I had a team, I had a process that would help people. I had a benevolent attitude towards supporting people who I didn’t really know very much about. But instinctively I knew, from my own experiences that, where is home? This is a big question. So, I started with this benevolent attitude that, “I’m in a position to offer something to you”.

What I hadn’t accounted for: being a recipient of care and generosity.
What I hadn’t accounted for was how much these women have to offer. The generosity of their giving. It puts me to shame in a way. I’ve learnt something that I didn’t know. I’ve learnt it from an experience of being a recipient of that generosity. Receiving that care from them. From women who don’t have what I have in term of material and legal resources, I’ve received so much. I’ve been part of providing a very welcoming atmosphere, but then within that, I have been welcomed by them. I feel privileged to have experienced that.

I've faced my prejudices.
I’ve faced inbuilt prejudices that I didn’t know I had. That has been incredibly useful, to see what I’ve absorbed from my Western cultural narrative. The stereotypical idea of Muslim people. One example is the women who come in the niqabs. I’ve found that, I have absorbed something, some malevolence, or that there’s something that these women are hiding. I have assumed that that’s made them not open to me or to Western culture. I had a feeling of being a bit threatened by it. But now I don’t bat an eyelid because I’ve seen these women. They arrive like that and then in a woman only setting they take it off and they’re completely open.

It's made me question how we are in our society.
In a woman only space, I’ve also been able to see how accepting they are of the process of birthing and breast feeding. They are not sexualising themselves. Somehow in our culture, when I was breast feeding in public, I felt like I had to be covering of myself. There’s a feeling of having to overcome something in order for my body to be a vehicle of nurturing a child.

Sometimes I’ve seen actions by the mothers that I’ve felt were harsh. Like a mother was telling her story to us, so it was her time and the child was going “Mum I want some water”. To me, if a child says, “Mum I want some water”, I would stop everything and go and get the child the water. But she was like “No you can wait, this is my time”. To me that seems so harsh. I judged that. But afterwards I thought about it and I thought the child was fine, they just had to wait a little while before getting some water or go and ask someone else. It showed me something about their boundaries in their mothering. It was different from how I was as a mother when my children were young.

It’s made me question how we are in our society. How we put nearly naked women up all around to sell things. And how I have accepted with my daughter and myself as a
younger woman, that to be a woman means to be to make yourself attractive. I’ve had to question that, which is good. I also think I’ve swung too far that way, then I’ve had to come back and see that actually there is something about covering yourself that’s a bit over the top. And that I am empowered in many ways in my culture.

I’ve witnessed a level of resilience that calls me to be resilient in the face of adversity.
I’ve been incredibly changed by hearing their stories and hearing what they have lived through. I have enormous respect for the resilience that they are able to draw on. I’ve witnessed a level of resilience that calls me to be resilient in the face of adversity.

It’s broadened my perspective of human beings. I’ve become more inclusive.
Wherever there was a sense of difference or ‘other’, [there was] a gradual experience of it not being ‘other’. Of similarity. That warmed me and allowed me to grow in my experience. “I’ve heard how you experience this so now I’m enriched because I’ve seen it through your eyes”. So, I have a much broader understanding of people in the world. An enormous warmth has grown in my heart towards people who I previously perceived as ‘other’. And an intellectual understanding as well. It’s completely broadened my perspective on human beings. I’ve become more inclusive as a person.

It has required an awful lot of self-awareness.
There’s a strength and there’s a commitment to stick with it and to meet these women. To go through anything that’s uncomfortable for me about the chaoticness of the space, or the ‘otherness’. If I perceive something as coming at me in a way that I don’t understand, to keep staying open and not withdrawing. I do think there’s a huge resilience in that. It has required an awful lot of self-awareness and choice to keep going forward and meeting it.

I have questioned my privilege and sense of entitlement.
I have questioned my sense of entitlement. I’ve learned to really value and appreciate that I have a home. If I need sanctity, I have it. Once upon a time a would have felt absolutely entitled to that. It’s opened my eyes to what it’s like for a lot of people in the world who don’t have that. To understand that that’s a privilege. Also, to understand what a privilege it is to be a white English-speaking person. I felt very ashamed for quite a long time, that I hadn’t even realised it. I felt like I wasn’t entitled to it. I feel like I need to share it, or I shouldn’t have it because not everyone has this. It was really horrible for a long time. I suppose I just had to come to terms with the fact that it’s the luck of birth. And to be grateful for it. To use my life and use the benefit that I have of that privilege, to offer some service to life and to world. Not just to take that privilege. But to take the sanctity and build my strength and have the head space and heart space to listen to other people and in some way share or stand with them. To accept that that’s of some value. Not to squander my privilege and keep it for myself.

Not falling into romanticising. People are real.
[It’s important] not to fall into a trap of romanticising, that there are these women and they’ve got such strength and their so generous and good-hearted. All the positive
things that I can see. There are times when women are a bit edgy, have a bit of a go. Say something that hurts. I don’t have to just take that. I don’t have to receive that because they are disadvantaged. It’s not making them better than me. It’s not that I just always walk away going “ahh that was amazing”. The connection, it is real, so sometimes the love isn’t there. It doesn’t come towards me, even if I’m offering it towards them. You keep coming back. It’s real. People are real. And they’re relating in a real way.

It makes me question the world that we live in and what we can do about it. I think it’s just been incredible to hear the personal stories from women and what’s happening in their countries. It makes watching things on the news unbelievably personal. I feel the devastation of it far more. It makes me question the world that we live in and what can we do about it. It really has affected me to know these women. I feel like my understanding of the world is much more real. I understand that I am part of a global picture. Where countries attack each other, devastate, murder and kill. That’s the world I live in. And who am I in that? What’s my responsibility? I can’t turn away. I can’t distance myself from it in a way that I once did. Having to deal with the unbearableness of it. How much I can and can’t take. Living with how much power I do and don’t have. And how much energy I do and don’t have. Living with not being able to change the world. Appreciating or accepting that I play my part and coming to terms with whether I feel that that’s enough or not.

I’ve got the children in my mind. They are the future. I’ve just got the children in my mind. I don’t know what to say about them though, they’re just there, those little beings, I guess because they’re the future aren’t they.
Appendix J: Condensed Story Summaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jafia</th>
<th>Guvva</th>
<th>Rabia</th>
<th>Huawa</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Beginning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>I was new Mum, and I was far away from my Mum. The positive things here are they help you, they guide you.</td>
<td>It was difficult for me. My daughter always had a nanny: it wasn’t my job.</td>
<td>My Mum was there, my aunties, everybody come: I enjoyed that moment.</td>
<td>I had a good education and a Masters degree, I never expected life to go this way.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Middle</strong></td>
<td><strong>Middle</strong></td>
<td><strong>Middle</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Things are different in my country.</td>
<td>The UK teach me life skills because you don’t have anyone to help you.</td>
<td>I had to leave my baby when he was 1 year and 4 months</td>
<td>Feeling trapped</td>
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<tr>
<td>No-one will take your children if you are a good parent.</td>
<td>Now I have a few friends, but at first it was very difficult.</td>
<td>I didn’t get used to him, he’s a toddler, I didn’t see him like that.</td>
<td>Wanting to pursue my dreams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stop judging me.</td>
<td>I want to keep maximum open mind with her, but it’s not the same here.</td>
<td>Then he started nursery. It was easier for me then.</td>
<td>Being pregnant and unwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will teach my children acceptance.</td>
<td>At the same time, I’m mother and father.</td>
<td>You have to be a strong Mum to look after your kids because nobody help you.</td>
<td>They took my son away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know my rights as a woman.</td>
<td>It is best that we are here, but it is difficult.</td>
<td>When they go to school, it’s very different here.</td>
<td>No-one supported me, being alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I applied for a teaching assistant course. I hope they will accept me.</td>
<td>If someone from my family was here, it would be easier.</td>
<td>When I okay, I do everything. But if one day I feel sick it’s going to be very hard for me.</td>
<td>No-one paid attention to my capacity to recover</td>
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<td>I will prepare them to defend themselves.</td>
<td>All your antennae have to be up: you are weak.</td>
<td>I miss my family lots. For my husband, things are different.</td>
<td>Keeping faith and hope</td>
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<tr>
<td>I worry for him.</td>
<td>Everything change.</td>
<td>I have to be strong for my children and for me.</td>
<td>Fighting for the right to see my son</td>
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<tr>
<td>He is my strength.</td>
<td>This day I understand that I am alone, nobody can help me.</td>
<td>I am ambitious: I really want to do something with my life, I don’t</td>
<td>Lack of freedom</td>
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<td>Finding inner value</td>
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<td>Faith in God</td>
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<td>Community and relationships</td>
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<td>I try to continue.</td>
<td>want to just come and go without helping anybody</td>
<td>Joy and gratitude for the small things</td>
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<tr>
<td>Now I can understand.</td>
<td>I think about my future, I want to study. For my husband things are completely different.</td>
<td>Acceptance: “everyone is struggling with something”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I have to find a balance.</td>
<td>I really like this way here, but I want my kids to be Islamic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terrible days.</td>
<td>You have to be very strong and confident to overcome what I’ve told you about.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To the end of England I will go: I want to be in a house.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They don’t call you your name. They call you a number.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not the End</th>
<th>Not the End</th>
<th>Not the End</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When you meet a lot of people, you accept a lot of people.</td>
<td>Everything step by step. Now it’s better than before.</td>
<td>You are like the dynamo.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After 2-3years it will be better than today.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We are human.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>Toula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being an ‘observer’</td>
<td>It was quite overwhelming</td>
<td>It’s different to how I imagined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned it would be overwhelming</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The warmth of the welcome</td>
<td>I feel completely accepted and included</td>
<td>Struck by remarkable strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of these emotions I have too</td>
<td>Going through trauma it was the only place I felt ‘met’</td>
<td>A reminder to be grateful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes me realise the strength we have</td>
<td>They embody their power as women and mothers: we bind ourselves up.</td>
<td>The appreciation for life and the joy of living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We are the same</td>
<td>The warmth of the welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I hadn’t got any concept that I could be part of it. I thought we would go and ‘deliver.’</td>
<td>I wasn’t expecting the joy, the fun, the laughter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
It’s helped me be more self-accepting beings. I’ve become more inclusive.

I have questioned my privilege and sense of entitlement.

Not falling into romanticising. People are real.

Bearing conflict, feeling trusted and affirmed.

I don’t need to put myself aside to be with them. I feel like it’s equal.

There’s education going on for all of us.

It’s helped me respect myself, seeing the value that’s placed on mothering.

Strength and growth happens in relationship, it’s reciprocal.

There wasn’t just one Mum, there was lots altogether.

Development over time

Patients grow in the course of therapy. We could grow in reciprocation.

Difficulty and Growth. Both and.

Is it enough to go and hear their stories and serve those women there?

There’s just something about being with them and being in there…the energy that they create around us all and how they sort of

It makes me question the world that we live in and what we can do about it.

There’s something about the stories themselves…but I don’t know what it is. Maybe I’ll just write it to you or something, if anything else

It’s not the end of the story. Things are ever evolving.
| In a big ‘mixing pot’ | That feeling of ‘I should do more and more’ | envelope us. That’s the thing that keeps me going back. I’ll probably think of lots of things once we finish the conversation | I’ve just got the children in my mind…I don’t know what to say about them though…they’re just there, those little beings, I guess because they’re the future aren’t they. | comes…it’s all such a mish mash of many years, you know. |
it was like when you first arrived compared to now, and what has happened in that

\[ \text{time.} \]

G: It was very difficult for all sides for me because I. First my daughter always had a

\[ \text{nanny (LH: \text{Mmm}) and um I have never feel any difficult you know to, to feed her or} \]

\[ \text{to uh, to do for her clothes, to clean, to wash (.) because I, it wasn't my job, never} \]

\[ \text{(LH: \text{Mmm}). It was difficult for me at first because I couldn't cook anything for her, but} \]

\[ \text{UK teach me to do everything and now I have all skills about life, about domestic life} \]

\[ \text{(LH: \text{Mmm mmm}) because here you don't have anyone to help you and for} \]

\[ \text{everything, from small domestic issues, to your interview with Home Office (LH:} \]

\[ \text{Yeah) you have to do yourself (LH: Yeah). No-one help you and you can't believe,} \]

\[ \text{you can't believe or trust people, people you don't know before, not your family (.) it} \]

\[ \text{takes time for me to be friends and to build trust (LH: Yes yeah) and now I have a} \]

\[ \text{few friends so if I have a difficulty to pick up my child from school or something I can} \]
## Women's Stories

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<td>Life 'Before'- past self</td>
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<tr>
<td>'Middle'</td>
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<td>Children as a source of strength and growth</td>
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<td>Powerlessness, Discrimination and Fear to Agency and Acceptance</td>
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<td>Self as having something to contribute and give</td>
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## Volunteer and Self Stories

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Being 'outside', 'a helper', 'an observer'</td>
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<td>'Middle'- Re-Positioning</td>
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<td>'All women together'- feeling the connections</td>
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<td>Allowing space for difference, difficulty and disagreement</td>
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<td>Being a 'recipient' and reciprocation</td>
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<td>Positioning the women as extraordinary</td>
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<td>Questioning Privilege and Responsibility</td>
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<td>Re-evaluating narratives of self and society</td>
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<td>(Not) the end Questions and Continuation</td>
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Appendix L: Dissemination Statement

I intend to submit this research to the Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychology. I have been invited to present the research at the European conference for Qualitative Research in Psychology (EQuiP), as part of a symposium on refugee narratives and discourses. I have also been asked to present the research locally, in collaboration with Playback Theatre, to the Totnes Beyond Borders Network. Finally, it is most important to me to feedback the research to the women's group and I am in communication with facilitators about how and when to do this. The current intention is to tell the story of the research through Playback.
Appendix M: Copy of Instructions for Authors for Journal of Qualitative Research in Psychology

https://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?show=instructions&journalCode=uqrp20